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**THE MORAL THEORY AND APPLIED ETHICS  
OF  
SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO  
AS PRESENTED**

**IN**

*In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*

**AND**

*In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos*

**BY  
JOHN PASCHAL BANE**

**31 DECEMBER 1998**

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- 2 NOV 1999



## ABSTRACT

Grounded in Christian revelation and drawing heavily on ancient philosophical enquiry, Augustine presents a moral theory and applied ethic in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* which acknowledges that man's pursuit of happiness through participation in God is frustrated by sin and can be realised only with the help of an appropriate mediator. Reconciliation is wrought and the doctrine of the mediator fulfilled in the man Christ Jesus: his life, death and resurrection provide a way to the Truth and Life of eternal happiness because in Christ the Word assumed flesh without loss of his divinity. Moral and intellectual purification await those who are willing to imitate Christ by speculating on a life of humility and obedience.

Augustine uses the images of Christ as a Teacher and as a Physician to explain how Christ communicates his truth and grace to both the inner and outer man. Christ continues this work of mediation through the Church's doctrinal and sacramental life. By empowering believers to love God and neighbour, the Holy Spirit helps Christians understand their faith more fully and remain united in their witness to the world.

Augustine argues that to become righteous, wise and holy in eternity like God, man must seek to grow in virtue, knowledge and love now by submitting his intellect and will, disordered by sin, to God's perfect Charity. By faith in Christ working through the unifying love of the Spirit, man is led on to the Father of Truth and has the image of God in which he was made renewed. So in direct opposition to the pride, envy and division he saw as characterising man's Fall and subsequent pursuit of the lusts of the world, Augustine advances a morality rooted in the humility, charity and unity of the Trinity.

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JOHN PASCHAL BANE

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	
Introduction	7
Augustine the Man	7
Augustine the Christian	17
Augustine the Bishop	20
Augustine the Preacher	21
Augustine on John	27
<b>SECTION A: MORAL THEORY</b>	
<b>CHAPTER 1. THE HAPPY LIFE</b>	
Introduction	32
Life	33
Truth	40
Will	44
Conclusion	52
<b>CHAPTER 2. THE FALL</b>	
Introduction	54
Creation	54
Fall of Adam	57
Original Sin	62
Personal Sin	65
Conclusion	67
<b>SECTION B: THE MEDIATOR</b>	
<b>CHAPTER 3. THE MAN CHRIST JESUS</b>	
Introduction	71
Christ the Teacher	71
Christ the Physician	79
Christ the Mediator	85
Conclusion	95
<b>SECTION C: APPLIED ETHICS</b>	
<b>CHAPTER 4. THE CHURCH</b>	
Introduction	99
Prayer and Work	100
Donatism	102
Heresy	109
Conclusion	118
<b>CHAPTER 5. THE WORLD</b>	
Introduction	123
Sensuality	124
Curiosity	127
Worldly Ambition	130
Conclusion	132
<b>CONCLUSIONS</b>	136
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	141

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# INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

1 “For you I am a bishop, with you I am a Christian”<sup>1</sup>. Before either, Augustine was a man. The life Augustine led, firstly, before baptism and, secondly, between baptism and episcopal ordination was to affect profoundly the moral theory and applied ethics he propounded as a bishop. Accordingly, the present introduction will examine, firstly, how Augustine’s earnest pursuit of Truth as a young man was shaped by, in turn, Manichean determinism, Academic scepticism and Platonic optimism; secondly, how a sea change in Augustine’s world view was wrought by his growth in Christian faith and his reading of Saint Paul during his time as a newly-baptised Christian and presbyter. Account will then be made of Augustine’s life as a bishop, particularly his preaching. Acquainted with Augustine’s personal history, his early philosophical enquiries and his views on episcopal office, the mature moral and ethical thought he presents to his Catholic congregation in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, the subject of this work, can then be fully appreciated.

## AUGUSTINE THE MAN

2 One of three children, Augustine was born (354AD) and raised in Latin-speaking Thagaste, North Africa. His primary education there was followed by schooling in Madura- sponsored by a family friend, Romanianus. Augustine was to return home briefly in 370 before going on the following year for further study in Carthage, the second city of the Western Empire. There, in 372, he took a concubine who bore him a son. Initially unwanted, ‘God’s gift’, Adeodatus, became a source of great happiness and encouragement to Augustine before the boy’s early death, aged 17.

3 According to Augustine, his parents were concerned less about their son becoming a father than they were about his becoming a good orator<sup>2</sup>. The young Augustine too wanted to distinguish himself as an orator<sup>3</sup>. Nor were these career ambitions deflected by the “incredible ardour... for the immortality of wisdom” stirred

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<sup>1</sup> *serm.* 340.1

<sup>2</sup> *conf.* 2.2.4

<sup>3</sup> *conf.* 3.4.7

in Augustine's heart by Cicero's *Hortensius*<sup>4</sup>. Economic realities took precedence over high ideals and in 375 Augustine took up a teaching post in Thagaste. Distressed by the death of a close friend there<sup>5</sup>, Augustine returned to Carthage and "quickly made contact with distinguished outsiders"<sup>6</sup>. However increasing disillusionment with Manicheism, mounting dislike for rowdy students and the promise of greater rewards in Rome eventually saw Augustine set sail for there in 383.

4 In autumn 384 he was appointed professor of rhetoric in Milan, the Imperial Capital. His mother, Monica, who had always wielded a strong influence over her son (especially after the death of her somewhat ill-tempered and unfaithful husband, Patrick, in 372) joined Augustine there in Spring 385 and, for a mixture of moral and professional concerns, arranged a marriage partner for her son<sup>7</sup>. This meant that the unnamed concubine of lower-class or slave origin Augustine had remained faithful to for thirteen years was dismissed back to Africa. The conflicting emotions she aroused in Augustine had as much to do with his protracted struggle with himself as with the girl herself. Augustine was "cut and wounded" by her departure yet unable to wait two years for his bride-to-be to come of age. So, he tells us, being "not a lover of marriage but a slave of lust, I procured another woman"<sup>8</sup>.

5 Intellectual confusion also engulfed Augustine at this time. Manichean myths had been exposed; Academic scepticism offered his soul no healing; and "it was not yet evident that the Church [whose catechumenate he had joined on the basis of the precedent of his parents] taught the truth"<sup>9</sup>. Augustine "wanted to be as certain about things I could not see as I am certain that seven and three are ten," but he could give his wholehearted assent to nothing "for fear of believing what is false"<sup>10</sup>. Yet, Augustine reflects, at that time there were "innumerable things [about other times and places] I believed which I had not seen" and he did so on the word of friends, physicians or others. Regarding God:

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<sup>4</sup> *conf.* 3.4.7

<sup>5</sup> *conf.* 4.4.9

<sup>6</sup> Brown p.67

<sup>7</sup> Chadwick ed. p.108 note 17

<sup>8</sup> *conf.* 6.15.25

<sup>9</sup> *conf.* 5.14.25

<sup>10</sup> *conf.* 6.4.6

“I always retained belief both that you are and that you care for us, even if I did not know what to think about your substantial nature or what way would lead, or lead me back, to you... we were too weak to discover the truth by pure reasoning and therefore needed the authority of the sacred writings”<sup>11</sup>.

Augustine always acknowledged that “I would not have believed the Gospels except on the authority of the Catholic Church”<sup>12</sup>. Yet it is important to note, as Augustine himself does, that he was attracted by the modesty of the church’s teaching and the “holy humility” of the Bible which “was open to everyone to read, while keeping the dignity of its secret meaning for a profounder interpretation”<sup>13</sup>.

6 Talk of the Bible’s ‘holy humility’ in *Confessiones* is no chance description. Augustine wrote this work a decade after his baptism, during his first years as a bishop. Like any autobiography, only more so, Augustine draws on his experiences in the intervening years with a decidedly didactic purpose. The holy humility he attributes to Scripture is the very characteristic he prizes so highly in Christ Jesus- who “humbled himself and became obedient unto death”<sup>14</sup>. In Augustine’s moral theory, humility is presented as the necessary first step to moral and intellectual purification and holiness as the defining feature of Christian desire<sup>15</sup>. Hindsight is indeed a wonderful thing and Augustine made the most of his in writing up the account of his journey towards baptism in *Confessiones*.

7 The deeper teachings of the Bible were first opened to Augustine by Ambrose. His spiritual interpretation of Scripture resolved many of the absurdities and perverse teachings Augustine’s literal interpretation could not avoid<sup>16</sup>. Nevertheless a problem remained. Although Augustine affirmed God to be immune from pollution and change and accepted him as the creator of all physical and spiritual things, he “had no clear and explicit grasp of the cause of evil”<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> *conf.* 6.5.7-8; see Chapter 3.7

<sup>12</sup> *Against the epistle of the Foundation* 5.6 in Rist p.58 (note 29- cf. *C.faust* 22.79, *doctr.chr.* 2.8.12)

<sup>13</sup> *conf.* 6.5.7-8

<sup>14</sup> Phil. 2:8; all Scripture references are taken from *The Holy Bible- Revised Standard Version* Catholic Biblical Association of Great Britain Oxford University Press, Oxford 1966

<sup>15</sup> see Chapter 1.36-44, 4.1

<sup>16</sup> *conf.* 6.4.6

<sup>17</sup> *conf.* 7.3.4

8 Through reading some books of the Platonists<sup>18</sup> Augustine came to realise: “that things which are liable to corruption are good... Therefore, as long as they exist, they are good. Accordingly, whatever things exist are good, and the evil into whose origins I was inquiring is not a substance for if it were a substance, it would be good.

I inquired into what wickedness is; and I did not find a substance but a perversity of will twisted away from the highest substance, you O God, towards inferior things, rejecting its own inner life and swelling with external matter”<sup>19</sup>.

The clear parallel presented to Augustine by Neoplatonism runs through the whole of his subsequent thought: metaphysically, existence is a good and lack of being is evil whilst, morally, a will for God is good and the lack of such a will is evil.

9 Brown observes that,

“Augustine’s ‘conversion to philosophy’ is one of the most fully-documented records of such a change in the ancient world; its course was one of the most complex: and the final form that emerged, one of the most idiosyncratic”<sup>20</sup>.

The full nature and extent of the influence of Neoplatonism on Augustine is still widely debated<sup>21</sup>. Apart from lifting him out of his sceptical inertia in Milan, Neoplatonism gave Augustine a framework, a language and a whole host of ideas on beauty, truth and goodness in which he could conduct his search for happiness. Notwithstanding the great benefits Neoplatonism brought Augustine, he still “was not stable in the enjoyment of God”<sup>22</sup>.

10 In the books of the Platonists, Augustine read many things about the *Logos*, “But that ‘the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us’ [Jn. 1:13-14], I did not read there.” Neither did “these books” of the Platonists speak of the Word humbling himself to take on human form, becoming obedient unto death on a cross and therefore being

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<sup>18</sup> Exactly which books Augustine read is not known but the strand of thought they embodied was almost certainly the Neoplatonism propagated to an esoteric circle by Plotinus (AD.205-270) and subsequently edited by his pupil Porphyry (AD.250-305)- see Chadwick p.8-9

<sup>19</sup> *conf.* 7.23.28, 7.26.33, Eccl. 10.10

<sup>20</sup> Brown p.101-102

<sup>21</sup> The bibliography on the nature and extent of Neoplatonic influence on Augustine is considerable- see Harrison p.8 note 32

exalted by God above all things<sup>23</sup>. So although the Platonists “know ‘God, they do not glorify him as God or give thanks, but are lost in their own thoughts and their foolish heart is obscured; professing themselves wise, they have become fools’[Rom. 1:21-3]”<sup>24</sup>. The three scriptural texts- Jn. 1:1-18, Phil. 2:6-11 and Rom. 1:18-32- cited in this section of *Confessiones* were referred to with great frequency by Augustine in later years. For him, their various emphases on grace and truth, humility and obedience, divine revelation and gratitude for it, enlighten man as to what constitutes true religion and its practice; demonstrate how such teaching is fulfilled in and by Christ Jesus; help explain how he, as the one mediator between God and man, provides a way to come to the truth and life of God<sup>25</sup>.

11 “But the day had now come when I stood naked to myself... The arguments were exhausted, and all had been refuted.

The one necessary condition, which meant not only going but at once arriving there, was to have the will to go [to God]- provided only that the will was strong and unqualified, not the turning and twisting first this way, then that, of a will half-wounded.

I seized [the book of the apostle], opened it and in silence read the first passage on which my eyes lit: ‘Not in riots and drunken parties, not in eroticism and indecencies, not in strife and rivalry, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in its lusts’[Rom. 13:13-14].

All the shadows of doubt were dispelled”<sup>26</sup>.

12 What, if any, manner of ‘conversion’ Augustine experienced before, during or after his time in Milan is keenly debated. Markus believes that Augustine’s ‘disenchantment’ with Manichee dualism had the most far-reaching and permanent effects on Augustine’s mind<sup>27</sup>. Brown argues that the Platonic books precipitated “a final and definitive ‘conversion’ from a literary career to a life ‘of Philosophy’”<sup>28</sup> in Augustine because, unlike the esoteric Wisdom of the Manichees, Christian Platonism

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<sup>22</sup> *conf.* 7.17.23

<sup>23</sup> Phil. 2:6-11

<sup>24</sup> *conf.* 7.9.14

<sup>25</sup> 1Tim. 2:5, Jn. 14:6- see Chapter 3.1, 48-51

<sup>26</sup> *conf.* 7.10.26; 7.8.14, 8.7.18, 8.8.19, 8.12.29

<sup>27</sup> Markus 1 p.41

<sup>28</sup> Brown p.101

gave Augustine a “confident sense of being able to develop his intellect creatively within the framework of the Catholic church”<sup>29</sup>. Rist however is adamant that, “There is only one point of conversion in the *Confessiones*: “the progress of notional assent which is described in book 7 is followed by the account of *the* conversion, that is Augustine’s desire to ask for baptism, in book 8”<sup>30</sup>. Bonner too says that “Augustine’s conversion took place at the beginning of August 386”<sup>31</sup>. Meanwhile Madec claims “Augustine a toujours été chrétien”<sup>32</sup> and that his coming to seek baptism was less the ‘conversion’ of a pagan than the ‘evolution’ of a catechumen. To resolve some of these differences it is helpful to consider the context in which Augustine underwent any conversion he did do; namely, his pursuit of happiness.

13 After completing the autobiographical sections of *Confessiones* (Books 1-9), Augustine embarks upon an exploration of memory (Book 10) in the middle of which appears a discussion of the happy life. The continence Plotinus says is integral to happiness is interpreted by Augustine as demanding abstention from the three lusts of the world identified by Saint John<sup>33</sup>. In *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, Augustine describes “the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life” in terms of sensuality (including excessive eating and drinking and carnal cohabitation), curiosity (including theatre spectacle, occult arts and tempting God) and worldly ambition (egotistical domination of others through riches or power)<sup>34</sup>; and employs them regularly in his moral theory and applied ethics to examine man’s disintegration into multiplicity<sup>35</sup>. A careful re-reading of the autobiographical sections of *Confessiones* reveals how each figured prominently in Augustine’s own life.

14 As a boy Augustine fell victim to “gluttony... a restless urge to imitate comic scenes... [and] a vain desire to win”<sup>36</sup>. In his youth, “Clouds of muddy carnal concupiscence” began to engulf Augustine in a storm of “insatiable sexual desire”<sup>37</sup>; the hypocritical prayer for “chastity and continence, but not yet” produced “a sacrilegious

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<sup>29</sup> Brown p.112

<sup>30</sup> Rist p.4

<sup>31</sup> Bonner 1 p.92

<sup>32</sup> Madec p.23

<sup>33</sup> 1Jn. 2:16, *conf.* 10.29.40-10.39.64- cf. Chadwick ed. p.202 note 26

<sup>34</sup> *ep.lo.tr.* 2.12-14

<sup>35</sup> *conf.* 2.1.1

<sup>36</sup> *conf.* 1.19.30

<sup>37</sup> *conf.* 1.2.2, 1.15.25

quest for knowledge”<sup>38</sup>; the desire “to win human approval” led to his becoming “a salesman in the market of rhetoric”<sup>39</sup>. Since Augustine remained ensnared by all three lusts of the world in Milan<sup>40</sup>, it is only reasonable that the account of his conversion in *Confessiones*, especially Book 8, be examined against this backdrop.

15 As an adolescent, Augustine acknowledges “the single desire that dominated my search for delight was simply to love and be loved.” At sixteen, “Sensual folly assumed domination over me” and by thirty, “what held me captive and tortured me was the habit of satisfying with vehement intensity an insatiable sexual desire”- as witnessed by his inability to wait for his arranged bride to come of age<sup>41</sup>. Throughout all this time:

“I longed for the happy life, but was afraid of the place where it has its seat, and fled from it at the same time as I was seeking for it. I thought I would become miserable if I were deprived of the embraces of a woman. I did not think the medicine of your mercy could heal that infirmity because I had not tried it. I believed continence to be achieved by personal resources which I was not aware of possessing. I was so stupid as not to know that, as it is written <sup>42</sup>, ‘no one can be continent unless you grant it’”<sup>43</sup>.

This experience helped teach Augustine that the remedy for man’s infirm will lay not in his own strength but in the grace of Christ’s weakness<sup>44</sup>.

16 Like large sections of *Confessiones*, the above references suggest that continence for Augustine meant celibacy. While Augustine may have felt abstention from sexual intercourse was necessary for *his own* pursuit of the happy life, he recognised that “Many great men entirely worthy of imitation have combined the married state with a dedication to the study of wisdom”<sup>45</sup>. It is also important to note the presence and inter-relationship of the three lusts of the world in Augustine’s life and conversion.

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<sup>38</sup> *conf.* 8.7.17, 3.3.5

<sup>39</sup> *conf.* 4.14.23, 9.2.2

<sup>40</sup> *conf.* 6.10.17-6.12.22

<sup>41</sup> *conf.* 2.2.2, 4, 6.12.22. 15.25

<sup>42</sup> Wis. 8.21

<sup>43</sup> *conf.* 6.11.20

<sup>44</sup> see Introduction 32

<sup>45</sup> *conf.* 6.11.19- he also went on to write *De bono coniugali*



17 Augustine's claim that through the "zeal for wisdom" stirred in him by Cicero's *Hortensius*, "I came to despise earthly success" is flatly contradicted in both his next paragraph- where he admits that this book had not led him to "despise worldly ambition"; and his subsequent life- where he continues to pursue "the empty glory of popularity" through poetry competitions. He also continued to indulge his intellectual curiosity by dabbling in astronomy and horoscopes<sup>46</sup>.

18 Augustine confesses that after hearing how two friends of Ponticianus had been moved to give up their high-ranking careers after learning of the life of Anthony of Egypt, God, "thrust me before my own eyes so that I could discover my iniquity and hate it. I had known it, but deceived myself, refused to admit it, and pushed it out of my mind." Augustine worried that while the uneducated advance to happiness by serving God "we with our high culture without any heart... roll in the mud of flesh and blood"<sup>47</sup>. A culture without heart prompts man to serve himself rather than God just as knowledge without love puffs up man in the worship of idols<sup>48</sup>.

19 Similarly, the story told by Simplicianus of the conversion to Christianity of Victorinus, a former rhetor in Rome, whose distinguished teaching had been rewarded with the "supreme" honour of a statue of him being erected in the Roman forum, made Augustine "ardent to follow his example." Even more importantly, after learning that Victorinus, in welcoming the law "forbidding Christians to teach literature and rhetoric" abandoned his academic post rather than his Christian faith, Augustine "sighed after such freedom... from the chain of sexual desire, by which I was tightly bound, *and from slavery to worldly affairs*"<sup>49</sup>. At the end of Book 8 of *Confessiones* Augustine confirms that "The effect of your converting me to yourself was that I did not now seek a wife *and had no ambition for success in this world*"<sup>50</sup>.

20 The interplay between the three lusts of the world is also evident in Augustine's meeting with Lady Continence in Book 8 of *Confessiones*<sup>51</sup> which comprises three

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<sup>46</sup> *conf.* 4.1.1, 4.3.4, 4.3.5

<sup>47</sup> *conf.* 8.7.16, 8.7.18, 8.8.19

<sup>48</sup> 1Cor. 8:1-6; cf. Chapter 3.11

<sup>49</sup> *conf.* 8.2.3, 8.5.10, 8.6.13- my emphases

<sup>50</sup> *conf.* 8.12.29, 8.6.13- my emphases; cf. Lepelly, H. *Un aspect de la conversion d'Augustin: la rupture avec ses ambitions sociales et politiques* Bulletin de Litterature Ecclesiastique 88 (1987) pp.229-246

<sup>51</sup> *conf.* 8.11.27

distinct parts. Firstly, Augustine was ‘enticed’ in “that direction... [in] which I was afraid to move” when the metaphorical lady kindled in Augustine a love for continence that overcame his fear “of being restrained from the treadmill of [sexual] habit”<sup>52</sup>. Secondly, Lady Continence gave hope of living continently to Augustine by substantiating her promises with “large numbers of boys and girls, a multitude of all ages, young adults and grave widows and elderly virgins” in whom continence had borne great fruit. These reassured Augustine that his notional delight in continence could be realised in practice. Finally, Lady Continence helped Augustine recognise and repent of his sin. His “profound self-examination... precipitated a vast storm bearing a massive downpour of tears” in the first instance and then a wish to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in its lust”<sup>53</sup>. Corresponding to these facets of his encounter with Lady Continence, are three major tenets of Augustine’s moral theory: firstly, “perfect love casts out fear”<sup>54</sup>; secondly, faith working through love manifests itself in action and so attracts followers<sup>55</sup>; and, finally, “The confession of evil works is the beginning of good works”<sup>56</sup>. For Augustine, the faith, hope and love underlying these convictions are produced by and reflected in a continence which God alone can give<sup>57</sup>.

21 The importance to Augustine’s conversion of ‘numerous good examples’ is not confined to his battle with carnal lust. Note has already been made of the stories told by Ponticianus and Simplicianus<sup>58</sup>. Augustine also speaks in glowing terms of his friend, Nebridius, who preferred the pursuit of wisdom to fancy friends, and generosity and prudence to profit; who listened “with rapt silence” to the asceticism of Anthony the Egyptian monk. All these characters, whom Augustine mentions during Book 8 of *Confessiones*, are examples of men who had given up curiosity and worldly ambition. Neither should “the precedent of my parents” be forgotten in this context<sup>59</sup>.

22 In the climatic reading of Rom. 3:13-14 Augustine attempts to buttress the claim he made at the beginning of Book 8 of *Confessiones*, that his reluctance to go along the

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<sup>52</sup> *conf.* 8.7.18

<sup>53</sup> *conf.* 8.1.1, 11.27, 12.28, 12.29

<sup>54</sup> 1Jn. 4.18, *ep.Io.tr.* 9.4

<sup>55</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 8.1

<sup>56</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 12.13- see Chapter 3.27

<sup>57</sup> *conf.* 8.11.27

<sup>58</sup> see Introduction 18, 19

way of Christ was due to his being “still firmly tied by woman... [and not by] my old ambitions in hope of money and honour”<sup>60</sup>. As has been seen though, for Augustine to claim that his whole conversion turned on, or effected, this one area alone would be incorrect. How conscious Augustine was that his ‘insatiable sexual behaviour’ masked deeper problems of curiosity and worldly ambition is difficult to gauge. What the above observations suggest though is that Augustine was aware of this in part at least when he came to write up the account of his conversion more than a decade after its event (whatever the evident pedagogical intentions of *Confessiones* were). This recognition was to grow over the years for, as Bonner illustrates, the lusts for carnal gratification and for domination are always joined together by Augustine in *De civitate dei*<sup>61</sup>.

23 At nineteen, Augustine prayed for “chastity and continence, but not yet” lest he be heard and healed quickly by God “of the disease of lust which I preferred to satisfy rather than suppress”<sup>62</sup>. Tempting God in this way constitutes an act of curiosity as defined in *In epistolam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*<sup>63</sup>. In recognising the hypocrisy of his prayer, Augustine came to realise his will for such gifts was not wholehearted. “For as soon as I had the will, I would have had a wholehearted will. At this point the power to act is identical to the will”<sup>64</sup>. A wholehearted will produces a holistic continence which is able “to abstain ‘from the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the ambition of the secular world’”<sup>65</sup>. For Augustine, such “continence has its strength in the seat of the will”<sup>66</sup> and, as personal experience taught him, demands a personal kenosis: “The nub of my problem was to reject my own will and to desire yours”<sup>67</sup>. This is why the defining element of Augustine’s moral theory is the ordering of the will- to self or to God.

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<sup>59</sup> see Introduction 5

<sup>60</sup> *conf.* 8.12.30, 8.1.1-2

<sup>61</sup> Bonner 2 IX p.312f

<sup>62</sup> *conf.* 8.7.17

<sup>63</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 2.12

<sup>64</sup> *conf.* 8.8.20f

<sup>65</sup> 1Jn. 2:16, *conf.* 10.20.41

<sup>66</sup> *civ.* 1.28

<sup>67</sup> *conf.* 9.1.1

24 All this of course is a far cry from Augustine's student days in Carthage where "I loved my ways, not yours"<sup>68</sup>. Yet throughout the intervening years Augustine was looking for one thing only- the happy life of joy based on truth<sup>69</sup>. Just as various partners come and go in human relationships before one's true love is found, so Augustine was to court Manicheism, Scepticism and Neo-Platonism before finding the bride of his "hot passions" in the Catholic church. Even then he still had to give the wholehearted consent of his will to make the marriage valid; that is, to have and hold the truth in charity, "the charity which builds on the foundation of humility which is Christ Jesus"<sup>70</sup>.

## AUGUSTINE THE CHRISTIAN

25 After events in the garden in Milan, Augustine resigned his post at the school of rhetoric so he could devote himself wholly to the service of God by means of the Liberal Arts<sup>71</sup>. Accompanied by his mother, son and brother, two other relatives, two of his pupils and his long-standing friend, Alypius, Augustine made for the villa of another friend, Verecundus, at Cassiciacum in autumn 386. The time spent there reading, praying and conversing was balanced by that spent working the land. The retreat benefited Augustine enormously and helped convince him of the merits of living in community.

26 After being baptised together with Adeodatus and Alypius by Ambrose in Milan on 24 April 387, Augustine decided to return to Africa. Accompanied by the Cassiciacum group (minus the two students, plus Evodius), he made for Ostia. The joy of the celebrated vision Augustine shared there with Monica<sup>72</sup> quickly turned to sorrow when his mother developed a fever within the week. Her death nine days later grieved Augustine greatly. These events came to mark the end of his tumultuous youth and the beginning of his Christian life proper.

27 After Monica's burial, Augustine was forced to abandon his return to Africa because of a blockade in the Mediterranean and so went to Rome. There he wrote *De*

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<sup>68</sup> *conf.* 3.3.5

<sup>69</sup> *conf.* 10.22.32

<sup>70</sup> *conf.* 7.20.26

<sup>71</sup> Bonner 1 p.92, Brown p.113

<sup>72</sup> *conf.* 9.10.23-26

*quantitate animae, De libero arbitrio I* and *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* before setting sail for Carthage in the late Summer of 388. Inspired by the example of the apostles, Augustine returned to Thagaste, sold the family property and founded a community where all was held in common. Adeodatus, Alypius and Evodius were among those who joined this monastery-cum-religious college where, as at Cassiciacum, a balance between study and manual work was struck. During this period Augustine wrote several works, including *De magistro*. This dialogue with his son concludes that there is only one Teacher, Christ<sup>73</sup>.

28 As Augustine's literary output grew so did his reputation. The quality of his work made him an attractive candidate for ordination. Augustine realised this but did not encourage it- he had found his vocation in the prayer, study and work of the community at Thagaste. When seeking out a potential new member for the community in Hippo Regius in 391, Augustine was, at popular demand, ordained priest by Bishop Valerius.

29 Delighted with his new presbyter, Valerius made a garden near the cathedral available to Augustine wherein the latter was able to found a new community and so continue his monastic lifestyle. Both priest and monastery flourished. Against local tradition for presbyters, Valerius also gave Augustine the opportunity to preach in public. Invitations to preach elsewhere soon came- most notably when he was asked to speak *On Faith and the Creed* at the council held in Hippo in 393. The successes that followed led Valerius to make Augustine coadjutor bishop lest he be kidnapped by another diocese- as was attempted. When Augustine succeeded Valerius as sole bishop of Hippo in 396, he did so with a world view significantly different from the one he had retired to Cassiciacum with.

30 Writing in 386 in *De beata vita*, Augustine proceeds from his conviction that all want to be happy along the lines of Stoic moderation to suggest that the happy life of possessing God, the full measure, is arrived at by way of virtue, the just measure of which refrains from excess indulgence in the temporal while refusing underachievement in the eternal<sup>74</sup>. The Stoic emphasis on valuing eternal goods over temporal ones was

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<sup>73</sup> *mag.* 14.45-46, Mt. 23:10

<sup>74</sup> *beata.v.* 4.33-34

retained by Augustine throughout his life, but both the nature of the virtue that sought to cling to the higher valued goods and the belief that man could attain perfection in this life underwent serious revision very quickly.

31 In book 1 of *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae*, written in 388, Augustine declares virtue to be nothing other than the perfect love of God. This entails loving authority, especially Scripture, and manifests its love of neighbour through observing biblical commandments and ecclesial precepts. This new-found stress on authority and obedience to it, arises out of Augustine's refined understanding of *caritas* (love of eternal things leading to happiness and freedom) and *cupiditas* (love of temporal things leading to misery and enslavement) in terms of humility and pride respectively. Whereas the humble man who acknowledges his creatureliness and consequent dependency on God is ready to abide by divinely revealed authority, the proud man seeks self-autonomy apart from and in opposition to God and his commandments<sup>75</sup>. In Augustine's maturing moral and ethical thought, humble obedience serves to purify man morally and intellectually while proud disobedience succeeds only in weakening his will and understanding. When placing love in the operation of a will that is free to choose in another work of 388, book 1 of *De libero arbitrio*, Augustine determines the punishments of infirmity and ignorance to be just because man's turning from the eternal to the temporal is voluntary<sup>76</sup>.

32 By the time Augustine came to write books 2 and 3 of *De libero arbitrio* in 395/7, he had exchanged his moral and ethical outlook from a classical eudaemonistic position with a strong confidence in man's ability to attain by himself some degree of perfection in this mortal life to an unashamedly Christian stance where man, as far as was possible, was to co-operate with divine assistance to obey God's revealed will. Augustine had been brought to what was become his mature thought as his Christian faith grew in understanding. This ongoing process was accelerated greatly by his reading of Saint Paul in the early 390's. Writing *Acta contra Fortunatum Manicheum* as a presbyter in 392, Augustine notes that whereas man's created nature sinned perfectly freely in Adam, man's corrupt nature, inherited from the fallen Adam, is

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<sup>75</sup> *mor.* 12.20-21

<sup>76</sup> *lib.arb.* 1.4.9, 1.11.23

constrained by a certain necessity to lust<sup>77</sup>. Meanwhile the four stages of salvation (before law, under law, under grace and in peace) identified in *De diversis quaestionibus octaginta tribus* (388-395) and *Expositio quarumdam propositionum epistulae ad Romanos* (394-5)<sup>78</sup> are alluded to by Augustine *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 49 (414)<sup>79</sup>.

## AUGUSTINE THE BISHOP

33 As a bishop, Augustine's stated concern was "for the Church entrusted to me; I serve its interests and desire less to rule it than to be useful to it"<sup>80</sup>. He took this duty to serve the people of Hippo seriously. He left them only when he was obliged to<sup>81</sup> and felt a keen responsibility for their souls as well as his own<sup>82</sup>.

34 Augustine's episcopal duties were considerable. Once clerical, liturgical and financial matters had been dealt with, he had to attend to the many spiritual and temporal needs of his flock, as a contemporary parish priest would, as well as spend long hours arbitrating civil cases as part of the jurisdiction of the Christian Roman Empire. Finally, ongoing battles with various schisms and heresies- particularly, Donatism and Pelagianism<sup>83</sup>- demanded numerous conferences and public debates, letters and treatises. Preaching, the focus of the present work, was integral to Augustine's attempts to defend and upbuild the Catholic faith because the majority of his congregation were illiterate.

35 Augustine's burgeoning reputation inevitably invited all sorts of attention. Those who pressurised him for political favours were disappointed though. Augustine's response to those who tried to force his hand over theological questions (as Victor attempted to over the origin of the soul) was equally forthright: "To [Augustine], a bishop's duties were not only 'pastoral'; they had also become 'medicinal.' Laymen

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<sup>77</sup> *c.Fort.* 3.18.52

<sup>78</sup> *div.qu.* 83 66-68, *exp.prop.Rm.* 13-18

<sup>79</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 49.12, 14; cf. *ench.* 118

<sup>80</sup> *ep.* 134.1 in Trapé p.145 – Trapé says Augustine's motto was "To rule is to be useful"

<sup>81</sup> *ep.* 122.1 in Trapé p.146

<sup>82</sup> *Frang.* 2.1 in Polman p.164

<sup>83</sup> see Chapter 4

who pontificated to the clergy would do well to remember this ‘tonic’ of authority. Augustine intended to ‘correct’ Victor, not to follow him”<sup>84</sup>.

36 Augustine’s personal life was marked by simplicity in dress, frugality in food and a sincere effort for charity in thought, word and deed. Clerics joining the episcopal household had to renounce their possessions and live in community. Guests, while warmly and generously welcomed, were invited to follow the house rules of no gossip and no swearing which were encouraged by a large notice and novel swear-box<sup>85</sup>. That Augustine sought to live as monastic a life as possible is not surprising for he was after all “a contemplative by inclination and a bishop by obedience”<sup>86</sup>.

37 To meet the demands of episcopal office, Augustine drew on all aspects of his wide and varied personal formation, the Scriptures and Traditions of the Church and the common experience of all men *in light of his faith in Christ Jesus*. The clarity of mind and joy of heart with which Augustine did this produced a vast intellectual and spiritual legacy, the breadth and depth of which has been felt both within and outside the Church in the centuries since his death. Yet Augustine claims to promulgate not his own message but the faith of the Catholic Church<sup>87</sup>. This is the faith Augustine celebrates in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*.

## AUGUSTINE THE PREACHER

38 Part of episcopal obedience, and a part Augustine took very seriously, was the responsibility to preach the word in season and out of season- to teach, to rebuke and to exhort<sup>88</sup>. In essence, the aim of Augustine’s preaching was simple- to protect and enrich the faith of his congregation by raising their knowledge and love of God. The methods and techniques Augustine’s used to this end must be examined carefully if a valid judgement of the moral and ethical thought presented in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* is to be made.

39 Augustine was under no illusion about the task facing the preacher:

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<sup>84</sup> Brown p.364

<sup>85</sup> Bonner 1 p.128-129

<sup>86</sup> Trapé p.145

<sup>87</sup> *trin.* 1.2.7

<sup>88</sup> 2Tim. 4:2



“The true servant of the Word must rouse the faint-hearted, console the meek, strengthen, refute the foe, repel the besiegers, teach the unlearned, shake the indolent, constrain the litigious, humble the proud, pacify the angry, help the poor, free the slaves, reward the good, punish the wicked, and watch over all”<sup>89</sup>.

To meet this challenge, Augustine drew on all his life’s experiences and utilised all his emotional, intellectual and spiritual capabilities. He preached at least twice a week (on Saturday and Sunday) and sometimes for several consecutive days. Of some 8,000 homilies on liturgical seasons, scriptural passages and specific topics just 546 (7%) are extant. To these must be added his commentaries on the Psalms, the Gospel of Saint John and the First Letter of Saint John. Whether preached by Augustine himself or dictated privately for later or wider dissemination, all his sermons were intended for use in the liturgical assembly.

40 In Book 4 of *De doctrina christiana* Augustine declares that the duty of a preacher is twofold: to instruct and to inspire<sup>90</sup>. Content is more important than style<sup>91</sup>, but style is not to be overlooked- preaching must serve up food that is both wholesome and seasoned<sup>92</sup>. To help in this task, Augustine drew heavily on Cicero’s advice for wise and eloquent speech<sup>93</sup> and frequently employed the diatribe style of Cynics and Stoics with its exordiums, rhetorical questions and imaginary interlocutors. He also made regular use of alliteration, colloquialism, humour, invective and word-play. Augustine believed clear and convincing speech was necessary to instruct and inspire his congregation in the ways of true belief and so protect his flock from the dangers of heresy and lethargy respectively<sup>94</sup>.

41 Preachers though are not rhetors. A preacher, according to Augustine in *De doctrina christiana*, “teaches, pleases and persuades’... more through the piety of his prayers than through the power of his oratory. Thus, in praying for himself and for those who he is about to address, [the preacher] should be a suppliant before he is a

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<sup>89</sup> *serm.* 340.1 in Polman p.165

<sup>90</sup> *doctr.chr.* 4.4.6

<sup>91</sup> *doctr.chr.* 4.5.7

<sup>92</sup> *doctr.chr.* 4.11.26

<sup>93</sup> *doctr.chr.* 4.3.7, 12.27, 17.24, cf. Cicero *De inventione* 1.1.1, *De oratore* 1.15.64, *orat.* 21.69f, 23.77f

<sup>94</sup> *doctr.chr.* 4.2.3

speaker”<sup>95</sup>. Prayer, Augustine continues, is necessary both for receiving and for passing on the word of God fruitfully<sup>96</sup>. If a preacher “does not listen to the word of God within himself, he will preach it in vain to others”<sup>97</sup>. This is why, as Augustine himself explains, Book 4 of *De doctrina christiana* on the method of teaching Scripture is preceded by three books on the method of exploring Scripture.

42 Augustine’s exegesis of Scripture is entirely Christocentric. “[I]n the Old Testament there is a veiling of the New, and in the New Testament there is a revealing of the Old”<sup>98</sup> because “all the prophecies... all the precepts... and everything which is concerned with the homage due to God- all these were symbols and predictions that find their fulfilment in Christ”<sup>99</sup>. Augustine’s Christological interpretation of the Psalter is based on “the doctrine of the ‘whole Christ’ (*Christus totus*)... In the psalms (he tells us) we hear the voice of Christ and the Church, of Christ in the Church and of the Church in Christ”<sup>100</sup>. For Augustine then, Christ is the interpretative key for understanding the Old Testament, the New Testament and the relationship between them. The church, he says in *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, is a mother “and her breasts are the two Testaments of the Divine Scripture”- she suckles the faithful on the milk of Christ’s humanity so they may be strengthened to feed on the meat of his divinity<sup>101</sup>.

43 Augustine’s Christocentric approach to Scripture did not in any way ignore or dismiss secular insights. O’Meara shows how Augustine always maintained that scientifically established facts must be accepted as primary rules in the exploration of Scripture, otherwise we may “find ourselves defending not the truth embraced by Scripture but our own ‘truth’ which subsequently may be found to be in error”<sup>102</sup>. Accordingly, in Book 2 of *De doctrina christiana*, Augustine declares all areas of empirical knowledge can and should be employed profitably in the study of Scripture. Knowledge of biblical and other languages<sup>103</sup>; of animals, plants and minerals<sup>104</sup>; of

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<sup>95</sup> *doctr.chr.* 4.12.27, 4.15.32

<sup>96</sup> *doctr.chr.* 4.30.63

<sup>97</sup> *serm.* 179.1 in Trapé p.151

<sup>98</sup> *cat.rud.* 4.8, *civ.* 16.26

<sup>99</sup> *civ.* 7.32

<sup>100</sup> *en.Ps.* 85.1 in Trapé p.153

<sup>101</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 3.1

<sup>102</sup> O’Meara p.25

<sup>103</sup> *doctr.chr.* 2.11.16

numbers, music and history<sup>105</sup> are all encouraged; as are the appreciation of architecture, medicine, agriculture, sociology and the human body<sup>106</sup>. Scripture, Augustine says in *De civitate dei*, is full of historical facts and symbolic meanings and should be “interpreted by anyone who is able to do so”<sup>107</sup>. In *Confessiones*, he argues that the different interpretations so produced, even ones not intended by the original author, are all valid provided they are “shown to be true by [God]”<sup>108</sup>.

44 Still, the norms and conventions of Scripture must be respected. In Book 3 of *De doctrina christiana*, Augustine acknowledges that despite making some mistakes (concerning the Lord’s body, recapitulation etc...), the *Book of Rules* by the Donatist Tyconius can “help greatly in penetrating the hidden meanings of Sacred Scriptures”<sup>109</sup>. In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, he explains frequently the rules governing Scripture’s use of allegory and metaphor, terms and tenses<sup>110</sup>; how the carnal practices and promises of the Old Testament are to be understood spiritually in the New Testament<sup>111</sup>; and how man is fed by Scripture’s simple passages while being exercised by its obscure ones<sup>112</sup>. When faced with the seemingly contradictory statements of David and John on ‘fear’, Augustine, in *In epistolam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, turns to the Holy Spirit and explains that just as one breath when blown into the two pipes of a flute produces a harmonious tune, so the one breath of God, the Holy Spirit, which inspired both the Old and the New Testaments guarantees harmony between them<sup>113</sup>.

45 The importance of the Holy Spirit to preaching is best appreciated when one recalls Augustine’s conviction that Scripture, Christ, the Church and the preacher all speak with the same voice because each is an incarnation of the *one* Word of God. Just as the Holy Spirit was intimately involved in the inspiration of Scripture<sup>114</sup>, the

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<sup>104</sup> *doctr.chr.* 2.11.24

<sup>105</sup> *doctr.chr.* 2.11.16-2.16.26, 2.28.42-44

<sup>106</sup> *doctr.chr.* 2.30.47

<sup>107</sup> *civ.* 16.2, 17.3

<sup>108</sup> *conf.* 12.18.27

<sup>109</sup> *doctr.chr.* 3.30.42-33.46

<sup>110</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 8.4, 17.5, 5.9, 47.6, 10.2, 28.3, 99.5, 107.3, 108.1

<sup>111</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 9.9, 20.12, 25.12, 28.9

<sup>112</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 18.1, 19.5, 21.12, 45.5

<sup>113</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 9.5

<sup>114</sup> *en.Ps.* 8.7 in Polman p.41

conception of Christ<sup>115</sup> and the birth of the Church<sup>116</sup>, so he continues his work of divine revelation through preachers that receive his gifts of wisdom and understanding with gratitude .

46 Still, as Augustine points out in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, “the operations of the trinity are inseparable”<sup>117</sup>, so that whenever the Father, the Son or the Spirit undertakes this task of speaking to, or teaching man, inwardly, “The whole trinity both speaks and teaches”<sup>118</sup>. Ultimately then, all men are “taught of God”<sup>119</sup>. Augustine therefore recommends that preachers follow the example of Paul who rose in humility to contemplate wisdom before descending in charity to preach to “babes in Christ” on carnal, not spiritual things<sup>120</sup>. As will be seen, for Augustine, humility and charity are to characterise not only the practice of Christian preaching but the whole of Christian living.

47 As Augustine often drew parallels between Scripture and Sacrament, it is no surprise to hear him declare in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* firstly, that, as with the sacraments, the transformations worked in the inner man through the proclamation and explanation of Scripture, are not wrought by the minister but by God himself; and, secondly, that, as with the grace of the sacraments, the truths of Scripture can flow through good and bad ministers alike<sup>121</sup>. Augustine then, like Paul, rejoiced whenever Christ was preached<sup>122</sup> but demanded preachers live as uprightly as possible because, as he observes in *De doctrina christiana*, “in causing his words to be persuasive, the life of a speaker has greater influence than any sublimity of eloquence”<sup>123</sup>.

48 When preaching, Augustine not only called on the help of God but also on the prayers and patience of the congregation<sup>124</sup>. Such requests reflect the respect Augustine afforded the people and their participation.

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<sup>115</sup> Lk. 1.35

<sup>116</sup> Acts 2:2-4

<sup>117</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 95.1

<sup>118</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 77.2- where necessary the language of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers translations of *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* has been updated

<sup>119</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 96.4

<sup>120</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 7.23, *en.Ps.* 119.2

<sup>121</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 5.15, 97.1, 1Cor. 3:6

<sup>122</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 11.8

<sup>123</sup> *doctr.chr.* 4.27.59

<sup>124</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 17.1, 96.1

“According to modern authors they ought to conceive of God as an old man up in the sky, over their heads. Perhaps some of them do; but their bishop gives them no encouragement”<sup>125</sup>.

“[H]e seemed to make no distinction between his study and his pulpit, and broadcast his learned conclusions regularly and forcefully to the congregation, thus putting them into popular circulation”<sup>126</sup>.

As Augustine shared his ideas on philosophy, theology and morality, the people “gave him their eager and intelligent attention; they reacted, interrupted, and applauded”<sup>127</sup>. Yet it was good conduct, not applause<sup>128</sup> that Augustine wanted. His desire for his listeners to be saved with him<sup>129</sup>, meant he was not prepared to flatter himself or them<sup>130</sup> but would speak as softly or as forcefully as the occasion demanded<sup>131</sup>.

49 As a preacher, Augustine was not without faults of course. His over-concentration on individual names, numbers and words often obscured the meaning of the text as a whole; his limited knowledge of different languages was compounded by poor or non-existent translations (of the Bible and Greek Fathers in particular); his exegesis was hampered by the knowledge limitations of his day; and he was often overly distracted by polemical concerns. To Augustine’s credit though, as the above examination of his life as a bishop reveals, he did try to practice what he preached. Furthermore, Augustine never indulged or patronised his congregation because though for the people he was a teacher, with them he was a “fellow pupil under the one True Teacher”<sup>132</sup>. The latter truth explains why for Augustine listening to and expounding the word of God are not merely activities the preacher does, but are activities which describe what a preacher *is*- a mediator of the word of God to man.

“The end of preaching was to make Christ better known, to continue the work of the Incarnation... The preacher is not a reasoner who proceeds from arguments, but is in the service of the word of God as he is in the service of the sacraments: he is the mediator between the text and the faithful”<sup>133</sup>.

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<sup>125</sup> Bonner 2 VI p.449

<sup>126</sup> Polman p.140

<sup>127</sup> Trapé p.155

<sup>128</sup> *serm.* 3.11.4 in Trapé p.155

<sup>129</sup> *serm.* 17.2 in Polman p.168

<sup>130</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 12.4

<sup>131</sup> *Frang.* 2.19 in Polman p.134

<sup>132</sup> *en.Ps.* 126.3 in Trapé p.151

<sup>133</sup> Norris p.386 in Lienhard et al eds.; cf. Chapter 3.41, 45, 4.1f

## AUGUSTINE ON JOHN

50 While Matthew, Mark and Luke concentrate on the humanity of Christ, claims Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, John contemplates the divinity of Christ. By giving Augustine every chance to develop his congregation's knowledge and love of God, John, "the preacher of sublime truths,"<sup>134</sup> provides Augustine with an especial opportunity to open up to them the moral and ethical dimensions of Christian faith. In turn, *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* provide the modern reader with a unique insight into Augustine's moral theory and applied ethics. For while Augustine does indeed issue direct ethical instructions in these works his primary objective is not to provide a list of do's and don'ts but rather to deepen his congregation's knowledge and love of God *and thereby* raise their understanding of and willingness to do the right thing.

51 The starting date for the beginning of *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* is widely debated and suggestions include 16 March 413<sup>135</sup>, the end of 414<sup>136</sup> and Winter 416<sup>137</sup>. However the heavy anti-Donatist rhetoric of the early tractates suggests these opening homilies were delivered at a time when Donatism was still strong and active. A starting date in the 400's rather than the 410's is therefore more credible. Thus Berrouard supports the starting date of Winter 406-7 favoured by La Bonnardiere and Le Landais<sup>138</sup>. The scholarly consensus that has now been reached is described by Madec<sup>139</sup> who says that though Augustine's tractates on John do make up one single work it is advisable to split them into three sections.

- a) *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 1-12 Preached at Hippo in Winter 406/7  
*In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 13-16 Preached at Hippo before 13 June 407
- b) *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 17-54 Preached at Hippo- probably in 414  
*In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 20, 21, 22 Inserted into this series at a later date
- c) *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 55-124 Dictated in Carthage from September 419.

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<sup>134</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 36.9

<sup>135</sup> Zarb, P. in Berrouard ed. p.31

<sup>136</sup> Burnaby, J. ed. p.257 *Introduction* to *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* in Library of Christian Classics Vol. 3 SCM Press Ltd., London 1955

<sup>137</sup> Comeau, M. *Saint Augustin: exègete du quatrième évangile* Paris 1930

<sup>138</sup> Berrouard ed. p.33

<sup>139</sup> p.191-2

The preaching of *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 1-16 was intermingled with homilies on psalms 21 and 95 and psalms 119-133, the psalms of ascent<sup>140</sup>. The much shorter, drier nature of the dictated tractates<sup>141</sup> reveal just how much Augustine was influenced by his congregation. He delivered *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* 1-8 in Easter week 407 and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* 9-10 in May that year.

52 In the opening paragraph of *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* Augustine acknowledges John is difficult to comprehend and wonders whether John himself fully appreciated all that he wrote because the heights of wisdom to which this eagle of the evangelists soared were so great<sup>142</sup>. In attempting to penetrate the mysteries of the Fourth Gospel therefore, Augustine recommends his hearers recall how, “[God] is much more present to you [than I am]; for I appear to your eyes, He presides over your consciences. Give me then your ears, Him your hearts, that you may fill both”<sup>143</sup>. Since God speaks to men through his Word, Augustine speaks to men through the same Word:

“We preach Christ; and therefore we enter in by the door. But Christ preaches Christ, for He preaches Himself; and so the Shepherd enters in by Himself... And He is the door to the Father, for there is no way to approach the Father but by Him. ‘For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus’”<sup>144</sup>.

Christ is the medium through which God has come to men and so he is presented by Augustine as the only medium through which man can come to God.

53 From the outset of *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, Augustine is concerned that in climbing the mountains of Scripture his congregation do not slip on the hidden rocks of heretics and schismatics<sup>145</sup>. Heresies arise, he says, when Scripture, which “is not rightly understood [is] rashly and boldly asserted”<sup>146</sup>. Charybdis, Scylla, Arius and Sabellius have each fallen into error regarding Christ Jesus by over-emphasising his

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<sup>140</sup> *en.Ps.* 21, 95, 119-133

<sup>141</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 55-124

<sup>142</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 1.1

<sup>143</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 1.7

<sup>144</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 47.3, 1Tim. 2:5

<sup>145</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 1.6, 3; see Chapter 4 in particular

<sup>146</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 18.1

divinity at the expense of his humanity, or viceversa<sup>147</sup>. Such people, Augustine repeats regularly in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, should acknowledge the rule of Scripture which maintains that the Word “was made what He was not, without losing what He was” and so differentiate between Christ’s human and divine words and actions<sup>148</sup>. Augustine contends that the obscure passages found in John can be explained by utilising another text of the gospel<sup>149</sup>. In *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* therefore, he urges his congregation to value all Scripture but especially “those things... which are of most force against the heretics”<sup>150</sup>.

54 In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, Augustine makes two demands of himself and others who purport to preach Christ- humility and unity. Augustine insists that the door of Christ is the low one of humility. He cites Sabellians, Arians, Photinians, Apollinarians and Manicheans as being among those who proudly exalt themselves by seeking their own glory rather than Christ’s because each grouping fails in one respect or another to preach Christ as “The Word, soul and flesh”<sup>151</sup>. Donatists incur Augustine’s wrath because he judges them to have failed to observe the second demand incumbent on Christians, that of “preaching unity”<sup>152</sup>. Only those who observe charity by maintaining unity with the “Church that is spread over the whole earth” can hear the Spirit of Charity speaking through the Scriptures<sup>153</sup>. For Augustine then, “Christ’s sheepfold is the Catholic Church. Whoever would enter the sheepfold, let him enter by the door, let him preach the true Christ... both man and God”<sup>154</sup>.

55 Whether inside or outside the Catholic Church though, Augustine asserts that men will not be able to bear “what the Lord refrained then from telling his disciples” unless they “seek to grow in the love that is shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Spirit,” for it is he who leads men to a deeper understanding of Christ and an increased willingness to obey his commandments<sup>155</sup>. The intimate link between the missions of

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<sup>147</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 36.2, 8-9

<sup>148</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 21.7, 10

<sup>149</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 43.6

<sup>150</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 2.1

<sup>151</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 45.5, 47.9

<sup>152</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 47.4

<sup>153</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 6.9, 6.12-14, 6.10

<sup>154</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 47.5

<sup>155</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 96.3-4, Jn. 16:12-13, Rom.5.5



the Son and the Spirit represents in many ways a blueprint for the moral theory and applied ethics presented by Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*<sup>156</sup>.

56 Augustine then held John the Evangelist to be one of those great souls “illuminated by wisdom herself”<sup>157</sup>. Not only did John recline on the Lord’s breast at the Last Supper<sup>158</sup> and drink in from there the mysteries of Christ’s two natures “but what he drank in secret he gave openly”<sup>159</sup>. The prologue of John helped precipitate Augustine’s conversion<sup>160</sup> and provided him with a key for interpreting the rest of the gospel, the mystery of the Word made flesh, full of truth and grace.

57 Norris is right both to observe and to explain that:

“Throughout Augustine’s preaching on the Gospel of John, he consistently treats the narrative portions of John’s writing as an opportunity for allegorical interpretation... Augustine interprets Scripture allegorically because God speaks to humanity most profoundly when he speaks in figures”<sup>161</sup>.

According to Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, “the Lord’s deeds are not merely deeds, but signs” and his words are “pregnant with sacramental meanings”<sup>162</sup>. The allegorical interpretations such convictions lead to vary from the sublime to the ridiculous<sup>163</sup>. Ingenious or contrived though, Augustine’s expositions of the Gospel and First Epistle of John sought to protect and enrich his congregation’s faith in the Word made flesh.

58 Augustine was “un chalcédonien avant Chalcedoine”<sup>164</sup>. In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, guided by the Spirit in union with the authority of the Catholic church, Augustine explores the mystery and beauty of Jesus Christ- one person, two natures. The truth and grace

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<sup>156</sup> see Chapter 3.10-13, 22, 41, 50

<sup>157</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 1.2

<sup>158</sup> Jn. 13:25

<sup>159</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 36.1

<sup>160</sup> see Introduction 10

<sup>161</sup> Norris p.392

<sup>162</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 7.6, 7

<sup>163</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 7.6, 7

<sup>164</sup> Outler, A.C. in Madec p.233

Augustine discovered in the Word made flesh inspired both his listeners then and the Church since.

# CHAPTER 1: THE HAPPY LIFE

## INTRODUCTION

1 Any theory on the moral motivation of man must consider the nature of its subject, man. Like the ancients, Augustine held man to be “a rational, mortal animal”<sup>165</sup>; rooted man’s moral responsibility in the faculty of reason which raises men above brutes<sup>166</sup>; and determined intellectual purification to be the fruit of moral purification<sup>167</sup>.

2 In the potted history of philosophy presented in *De civitate dei* 8, Augustine singles out Socrates for particular commendation since he was “the first to turn the whole of philosophy towards the improvement and regulation of morality” by arguing that the causation of the universe could be grasped only by an intelligence purified through the observation of a high moral standard. Of Socrates’ disciples, continues Augustine, Plato “quite overshadowed the rest” by joining together the practical wisdom of his master with the speculation of Pythagoras before dividing philosophy into three parts- natural (devoted to speculation), rational (distinguishes truth from falsehood) and moral (relating to action)<sup>168</sup>. These three divisions, observes Augustine, correspond in turn to Plato’s conception of God as “the cause of existence, the principle of reason, and the rule of life”<sup>169</sup>. “Plato defined the Sovereign Good as life in accordance with virtue; and he declared that this was possible only for one who had knowledge of God and strove to imitate him”<sup>170</sup>.

3 In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle, Plato’s disciple<sup>171</sup>, set forth the classical account of *eudaemonia*, happiness- the pursuit of which shaped ancient Greek thought. Aristotle illustrates how men’s actions are motivated by different ends but “not all ends are final. The highest good, on the other hand, must be something final” and that final end or highest good is happiness, “for we always choose happiness as an end in itself

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<sup>165</sup> *trin.* 15.2.11

<sup>166</sup> *civ.* 9.4, 13; in charting the development of the concept of ‘person’ in Greek thought, Clark 2 (p.101-103 in Leinhard et al eds.) illustrates how Cicero and Plotinus, inspired by Panaetius and Plato respectively, came to make morality conditional on rationality

<sup>167</sup> *civ.* 8.3

<sup>168</sup> *civ.* 8.3-4

<sup>169</sup> *civ.* 8.4, 5, 2

<sup>170</sup> *civ.* 8.8

<sup>171</sup> *civ.* 8.12

and never for the sake of something else. Actions in conformity with virtue evidently constitute such activities; for to perform noble and good deeds is something desirable for its own sake”<sup>172</sup>. Such activities, says Aristotle, are completed by pleasure<sup>173</sup>, must conform with the highest virtue possible<sup>174</sup> and should encompass a whole span of life<sup>175</sup>. Aristotle acknowledges that the perfectly happy life of continuous, self-sufficient and fatigue-free activity is more divine than human and says man comes nearest to it through his intelligence<sup>176</sup>.

4 While Aristotle initiated the school of ‘Peripatetics’, notes Augustine in *De civitate dei*, Speusippus and Xenocrates, in succeeding Plato at the Academy, spawned the ‘Academics’. Augustine says the most notable philosophers from each school are simply called ‘Platonists’ and under this name, the Greeks Plotinus, Iamblichus and Porphyry, together with the African, Apuleius, are to be most highly esteemed<sup>177</sup>. Augustine’s main source of information on such thinkers were Latin works like *Hortensius* and *De finibus bonorum et malorum* by Cicero<sup>178</sup> and *De philosophia* by Varro<sup>179</sup>. While Platonic perfectionism sought release from disordered passion through the power of reason, Stoic *apatheia* aimed at a state free from all emotion by the same subjection of mind over body. Critical but never prejudicial, Augustine defended the truths such thinkers discovered and attacked the errors they made with equal intensity. So before examining the singular importance of the man Christ Jesus to Augustine’s moral and ethical thought, account must be taken of the considerable debt Augustine’s intellectual formation owed to ancient philosophy in general and Neoplatonism in particular.

## LIFE

5 Augustine ranks the natural philosophy of the Platonists above all others because “They realised nothing changeable can be the supreme God... In their view both body and mind might be more or less endowed with form, and if they could be

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<sup>172</sup> Aristotle *Nichomachean Ethics* I, X p.15-16, 286

<sup>173</sup> Aristotle *Nichomachean Ethics* X p.282

<sup>174</sup> Aristotle *Nichomachean Ethics* X p.288

<sup>175</sup> Aristotle *Nichomachean Ethics* X p.290

<sup>176</sup> Aristotle *Nichomachean Ethics* X p.288-290

<sup>177</sup> *civ.* 8.12- philosophers now referred to as ‘Neoplatonists’

<sup>178</sup> see *conf.* 3.4.7, 6.16.26

<sup>179</sup> see *civ.* 19.1-3

deprived of form altogether they would be utterly non-existent. And so they saw that there must be some being in which the original form resides, unchangeable... it is there that the origin of all things is to be found, in the uncreated”<sup>180</sup>. For the Platonists, not only is God that being in which the original form or life resides, God *is* Form or Life. Quite simply, God *IS*<sup>181</sup>. If God is unchanging though, whatever God *IS* he must always have been and must always continue to be. This means that if, as the Platonic theory of forms argues, God *is* the original and perfect form of all things- goodness, truth, beauty - he was always and will always be so. Such things, Augustine agrees with the Platonists, are part of God’s essence: “For him, to exist is the same as to live, to understand, to be happy”<sup>182</sup>.

6 In contrast, explains Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, the mutability of man’s soul means it can increase or decrease in righteousness, wisdom and holiness. To grow in such qualities and so come to true happiness, man must respond in obedience to the “righteousness, wisdom, godliness, Charity” God supplies<sup>183</sup>. Herein lies the essence of Augustine’s moral theory and applied ethics: the God who created the soul remains the life of the soul. God vivifies the soul with the gifts of righteousness, wisdom and holiness (and every other good gift besides) by bestowing on it the divine life of Charity. Though a soul lacking such qualities can continue to animate the body, Augustine considers such an existence for the soul to be more akin to death than life. To rise to the life of true happiness in God, man must respond to God’s gift of himself in obedience. This is because obedience manifests love and so is the right and fitting response to God’s gift of Charity<sup>184</sup>.

7 Augustine therefore differentiates between ‘existing’ and ‘living’, between ‘being’ and ‘being righteous, wise and holy’, and asserts that such virtues are found by the soul not in itself but in its Creator. “In the purely philosophical sense”<sup>185</sup>, Augustine does indeed hold that existence is a good (and its corollary, that a lack of existence

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<sup>180</sup> *civ.* 8.6

<sup>181</sup> In *civ.* 8.11 Augustine confesses that “what impresses me most” about Plato is that he conceived of God as “HE WHO IS”[Ex 3:14]”

<sup>182</sup> *civ.* 8.6

<sup>183</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 19.11-12

<sup>184</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 19.11-12, 75.5

<sup>185</sup> Bonner 2 II p.273

denotes evil<sup>186</sup>), but “in the moral and spiritual sense”<sup>187</sup>, he would contend that existence without *virtue*- that is, without righteousness, wisdom and holiness- is not a *true* good. This is why Augustine dismisses the eternal existence of the demons who are devoid of truth and virtue as nothing but “an eternity of wretchedness”<sup>188</sup>.

8 To become and remain righteous, wise and holy like God, man, continues Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, must pass “beyond all changeableness” by rising “beyond the boundaries of time”<sup>189</sup>. To arrive at this “undisturbed stability,” Socrates, according to Augustine in *De civitate dei*, demanded that “the soul be relieved of the weight of lust that held it down... by accepting a high moral standard”<sup>190</sup>. Influenced in part by the lyric poet Pindar- who had argued in 5BC that, “while the body of every man is subject to overpowering death, a living image of life survives, since it alone comes from the Gods”- Plato too claimed that by emancipating itself from the passions the rational soul could become righteous, wise and holy like God<sup>191</sup>. Augustine’s incorporation of such ideas into his own doctrine of the image of God in man was qualified with a positive reappraisal of the human body<sup>192</sup> and a strong proviso against Stoic *apatheia*<sup>193</sup>.

9 “Plato, to be sure, held that the lesser gods, created by the supreme God, are the makers of the other living beings; but the immortal part they took from God himself, while they themselves fashioned the mortal frame. Thus he refused to make them the creators of our souls; but they made our bodies, on his theory. Porphyry holds that the soul must escape from any kind of material body to achieve perfection, and agrees with Plato and other Platonists that those who lived undisciplined and dishonourable lives return to mortal bodies as a punishment... [Such gods] are not our makers but our jailers... Therefore the Platonists should either cease to threaten us with punishment for our souls in the shape of these bodies of ours, or else leave

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<sup>186</sup> Chadwick ed. p.124 note 24

<sup>187</sup> Bonner 2 II p.273

<sup>188</sup> *civ.* 8.16, 9.3

<sup>189</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 20.12, 38.10

<sup>190</sup> *civ.* 8.3

<sup>191</sup> Callahan (p.49-51) says such thinking had not been part of the belief systems of Homer, the Orphics or the Pythagoreans

<sup>192</sup> see Chapter 1.9

<sup>193</sup> see Chapter 1.38-39

off proclaiming that we should worship their gods, while urging us by all possible means to escape from our involvement in their handiwork”<sup>194</sup>.

Two decades earlier in *De doctrina christiana*, the freshly ordained Augustine declared such philosophers “hate not their bodies but the corruption and solidity of their bodies. They do not wish to have no bodies at all but rather incorruptible and most agile bodies, and they think that no body could be so constituted because then it would be a spirit”<sup>195</sup>. By differentiating between the body and its limitations in this way, Augustine emphasises the essential goodness of man’s physical body; holds out hope that man’s desire to enjoy a body free of limitation may one day be fulfilled; makes it clear that Manichean dualism had no place to play in Christianity. For Augustine, as for all people, new beliefs precipitated new understanding and fresh hope.

10 Yet paradoxically, the Neoplatonic hierarchy of being which held belief in the greater and lesser divinities of One, Mind and Soul, did ease one of Augustine’s greatest problems- the mystery of evil. In the Neoplatonic world all beings emanated from the Transcendent Source: it produced effects less than itself, which produced effects less than themselves *ad infinitum*. While Augustine held to a view of creation from nothing over the Neoplatonists’ theory of emanation, he welcomed the identification of goodness with being and evil with a lack of being. Such thinking enabled Augustine to overcome Manichean materialism, put an end to his Scepticism and to teach that evil arose from the exercise of man’s free will (that is, something spiritual) rather than being inherent in matter<sup>196</sup>. It also underpins Augustine’s narrow interpretation of ‘virtue’.

11 In addition to the broad concept of virtue as being the difference between ‘existing’ and ‘living’<sup>197</sup>, Augustine, in *De civitate dei*, both accepts the ancients’ definition of ‘virtue’ “as ‘the art of good and right living’” and proposes his own definition of ‘virtue’ as “‘rightly ordered love’”<sup>198</sup>. Well aware that the same action can be produced by different motives<sup>199</sup>, Augustine always stressed the interior disposition of the moral agent and charges the will with the responsibility of rightly ordering man’s

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<sup>194</sup> *civ.* 12:27

<sup>195</sup> *doctr.chr.* 1.20.24

<sup>196</sup> *conf.* 7.11.17-12.18

<sup>197</sup> see Chapter 1.7

<sup>198</sup> *civ.* 4.21, 15.22. Augustine’s other definitions of virtue are variations on this theme of loving things in their right order- see *mor.* 1.15.25, *ep.* 155.4.13

<sup>199</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 8.9

loves. To do this successfully, the will needs to be wise in its ordering and holy in its loving. In Augustine's eyes, this means the will must develop the humility which, firstly, is prepared to accept in faith things it does not fully understand and, secondly, because it exalts in God and not in self, obeys God's commandments out of love. Such obedience is the key to the art of good and right living. In *De civitate dei* therefore, Augustine declares obedience to be "the mother and guardian of all other virtues in a rational creature" and insists that "obedience can belong only to the humble" who seek God's glory and not their own<sup>200</sup>. For Augustine then, man's will needs to be rehabilitated before man can live a life of virtue.

12 For clarity's sake, hereafter in this work, 'virtue' or 'the life of virtue' will refer to man's 'virtue' or 'life of virtue'; and God's 'virtues'- righteousness, wisdom and holiness- will be referred to as 'divine attributes'. Accordingly, man's life of virtue relates to God's life of righteousness, man's knowledge to God's wisdom and man's love to God's holiness. While man's possession of virtue, knowledge and love is temporal, partial and subject to change, the 'divine attributes' are eternal, perfect and immutable.

13 Among the moralists of antiquity, explains Hill, it was a commonplace that the four cardinal virtues of courage, sagacity, justice and moderation "were interdependent, so that one could not be possessed if the others were lacking, and the perfection of one depended on the perfection of the others"<sup>201</sup>. Such virtues, Cicero claims, would pass away in eternity because their *raison d'être* will have passed. Augustine agrees on the interdependency of virtue but insists that the virtues persist in eternity because, for example, being subject to the Creator would be part of man's eternal existence and subjection is a function of justice<sup>202</sup>. Augustine would argue not only that God exists in unchanging righteousness, wisdom and holiness, but that necessary and sufficient relationships exist between the divine attributes: righteousness reflects wise understanding and a holy will; wisdom practices righteous living and holy willing; holiness produces righteous living and wise understanding. Since each category is necessary to the other two, any shortfall in one category will both effect and reflect

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<sup>200</sup> *civ.* 14.12-14.13

<sup>201</sup> Hill trans. 2 p.214 note 5, cf. *trin.* 6.1.6

<sup>202</sup> *trin.* 14.3.12



shortfalls in the other two- instances of unrighteous living for example, may be precipitated by deficient understanding of what is right or may witness a lack of will in pursuing what one knows to be right. This of course is the situation in which temporal man finds himself. His pursuit of the divine attributes and the happiness they bring must therefore be conducted in a uniform search for virtue, knowledge and love.

14 Though convinced of the need to practise genuine virtue, Augustine remained wary of any tendencies to make the virtues into divinities since “they are gifts of the true God”<sup>203</sup> and critical of any who cultivated virtue as an end itself<sup>204</sup>. In *De civitate dei*, he goes on to praise true philosophers, including pagans, whose virtue is motivated by eternal, not temporal reward, and who have recognised that such a reward depends on God’s grace<sup>205</sup>. As with the acquisition of knowledge, Augustine would contend that if man appropriates the cultivation of virtue to himself instead of being grateful to God for it, he will become puffed up with pride<sup>206</sup>. By guarding against the presumption of pride, a man’s thankfulness for his life and talents, small or great, fosters and strengthens the all important attitude of humility.

15 By referring all things to God, the humble man learns what is to be ‘enjoyed’ and what is to be ‘used’. It is with respect to this distinction between ‘uti’ and ‘frui’ that Augustine analyses ‘love’ in *De doctrina Christiana* 1. “To enjoy something is to cling to it with love for its own sake”<sup>207</sup> and enjoying rightly chosen things makes man truly happy. Other things, he continues, are to be used to gain the things that make for happiness. Enjoying things that really ought to be used, argues Augustine, impedes man’s pursuit of happiness- just as excessive interest in roadside attractions hinders a man’s journey to a particular destination. Augustine recommends using creation with a transitory love (like that in a road, vehicle or instrument which take man where he wants to go) and enjoying the Creator with an abiding love (since he is above all things). Accordingly, “No sinner should be loved in that he is a sinner, and every man should be loved for the sake of God, and God should be loved for his own sake”<sup>208</sup>. In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, Augustine not only embellishes the above

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<sup>203</sup> *civ.* 4.21

<sup>204</sup> *civ.* 22.22

<sup>205</sup> *civ.* 22.22

<sup>206</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 14.3, 5

<sup>207</sup> *doc.chr.* 1.4.4

recommendation- “Love God... Use the world: let not the world hold you captive... You are passing on your journey, and this life is but a wayside inn. Use money as the traveller at the inn uses table, cup, pitcher, and couch, with the purpose not of remaining but of leaving them behind”<sup>209</sup> - but also reminds his listeners that the life of virtue does not permit the ignoring of “other men’s sins [on the pretext that] enough for me is the care of my soul”<sup>210</sup>. Unlike the highly individualistic Neoplatonic ascent of the alone to the Alone, Augustine’s return to God through a life of virtue explicitly entails a communal dimension.

16 That Augustine’s distinction between ‘uti’ and ‘frui’ in *De doctrina Christiana* in no way devalues temporal creation can be appreciated when one recalls the argument set forth in *De civitate dei* before Augustine’s proposed definition of virtue as ‘rightly ordered desire’:

“Now physical beauty, to be sure, is indeed a good created by God, but it is a temporal, carnal good, very low in the scale of goods; and if it is loved in preference to God, the eternal, internal and sempiternal Good, that love is as wrong as the miser’s love of gold, with the abandonment of justice, though the fault is in the man not in the gold. This is true of everything created; though it is good, it can be loved in the right way or in the wrong way- in the right way, that is, when the proper order is kept, in the wrong way when that order is upset”<sup>211</sup>.

In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, Augustine once again sets forth the practical consequences of this for man’s life of virtue very clearly: “a bad man makes bad use of all the good creatures of God: a good man, on the contrary, makes a good use [even] of the evil deeds of wicked men”<sup>212</sup>. Hedonists are grouped with the former, martyrs (provided they have been martyred for true wisdom) with the latter<sup>213</sup>. Kant agrees that reason is what transforms sensation into experience<sup>214</sup>.

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<sup>208</sup> *doctr.chr.* 1.7.7-8, 22.20-23.27, 35.39

<sup>209</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 40.10

<sup>210</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 10.9

<sup>211</sup> *civ.* 15.22

<sup>212</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 27.10

<sup>213</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 6.23

<sup>214</sup> Kant, I. pp.41-62 *Introduction* to *Critique of Pure Reason* in Smith, N.K. trans. Macmillan & Co. Ltd., London, 1950

17 Augustine bases the external art of good and right living on the inner art of rightly ordered loving but realises the perfection of either is beyond the reach of mortal man who is subject to time and therefore change in this temporal realm. By God's grace though, man's loves can be re-ordered aright and so rise from the death of iniquity to a life of virtue. Augustine recognises that the new life of virtue opened up to man by the law of Charity now operating in his mind is hampered in its practical operations by the war waged against it by the law still operating in his members. With the philosophers then, Augustine agrees that man will overcome this problem only after earthly death; but against them, he affirms the physical resurrection of a new spiritual body: "The spiritual flesh will thus be subject to the spirit, but it will be flesh, not spirit; just as the carnal spirit was subject to the flesh, and yet was spirit, not flesh"<sup>215</sup>. Once again, Augustine places his confidence for this second resurrection in the grace of the one true God whose creation of man's body was a gift, not a punishment<sup>216</sup>.

## TRUTH

18 In his search for truth, Augustine rejects the scepticism of the Academics, which held that it cannot be reached through sensation or intelligence by explaining, firstly, that many certainties (for example, about history, geography, our own parents) are learned through the senses of ourselves and other people and, secondly, that the intellect can be certain about its own existence and fundamental desire for happiness<sup>217</sup>. Augustine also rejects the Epicureans "who have placed the criterion of truth in the bodily senses" and the Stoics who "hold that the art [of disputation or 'dialectic'] is to be derived from the bodily senses" in favour of the Platonists who "have distinguished between the things discerned by the mind and those attained by the senses, without either detracting from the power of the senses, or ascribing to them powers beyond their competence, while they have declared that God himself, the creator of all things, is the light of the mind, which makes possible every acquisition of knowledge"<sup>218</sup>. In the search for truth then, Augustine contends man is taught the riches of wisdom and knowledge by God alone: either directly in man's mind or indirectly through sensible media- in which case the data collected by the senses is to be evaluated by a mind

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<sup>215</sup> *civ.* 22.21

<sup>216</sup> *civ.* 12.27

<sup>217</sup> And by extension, of the impossibility of expressing infinity- Hill trans. 2 p.439 note 47, *trin.* 15.4.21; cf. *trin.* 10.3.14, *civ.* 11.26

<sup>218</sup> *civ.* 8.7, 1

enlightened by God<sup>219</sup>. While the man who thinks on the flesh will never understand God (who is incorporeal), warns Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, the mind which turns to itself (rather than to God) for enlightenment will be deceived by its own imaginings<sup>220</sup>.

19 Many would claim that the workings of the mind as described above are simply the natural functionings of human reason and dismiss ideas on divine illumination as superfluous and unnecessary. In response, Augustine would argue, as indeed he does in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, that the miracles of creation are greater than those things man ordinarily refers to as miracles<sup>221</sup>. On this basis, the natural functionings of the human reason, their consistency within individuals and uniformity across peoples, all manifest the order a good God has bestowed on and in his creation. In a reciprocal fashion, Augustine argues in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, the very beauty and order of the universe reveals God to the human mind: “For such is the energy of true Godhead, that it cannot be altogether and utterly hidden from any rational creature, so long as it makes use of its reason”<sup>222</sup>.

20 Before continuing, it is worth noting the distinction made by Augustine in *De trinitate* between *sapientia*- ‘wisdom’ relating to things divine and eternal- and *scientia*- ‘knowledge’ relating to things human and temporal<sup>223</sup>. Just as man’s virtue represents an imperfect participation in God’s righteousness<sup>224</sup>, so man’s knowledge represents an imperfect participation in God’s wisdom- in each case, man responds to God’s initiative. Furthermore, as the truths of both *sapientia* and *scientia* are guaranteed by God who is *Truth*, a consistency exists between them which means they reflect and embody each other respectively.

21 In theory, explains Augustine in the midst of a discussion on the happy life in *Confessiones*, everyone claims to seek truth:

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<sup>219</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 15.21- In expressly confirming the goodness of the five senses and their subordinate role to reason, Augustine further reinforces his positive reappraisal of the goodness of the human body

<sup>220</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 20.11

<sup>221</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 8.1

<sup>222</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 106.4

<sup>223</sup> *trin.* 14.1.2; for the Christian Augustine, all the riches of wisdom and knowledge are hid in Christ- see Chapter 3.4

<sup>224</sup> see Chapter 1.11-12, 14, 17

“For if I put the question to anyone whether he prefers to find joy in the truth or in falsehood, he does not hesitate to say that he prefers the truth, just as he does not hesitate to say he wants to be happy. The happy life is joy based on the truth. This is joy grounded in you, O God, who are the truth... This happy life everyone desires; joy in the truth everyone wants. I have met with many people who wish to deceive, none who wish to be deceived”<sup>225</sup>.

‘Having’ truth is one thing, ‘living’ it is another. “Truth for [Augustine] is not just a sight to be looked at; it is a good to be made one’s own. We must love and live from the truth”<sup>226</sup>.

22 The link between Truth and the earlier definitions of inner and outer virtue<sup>227</sup> is immediately apparent: loving truth means man orders all his loves to truth; while living from the truth equates to the art of good living and consists in man obeying all the precepts of his ordered love. If Augustine is right, firstly, in affirming the Platonists’ identification of Truth with God and, secondly, in reasoning the happy life to be joy based on truth, then man’s happiness lies in finding joy in loving God and obeying his commandments. In answer to the man who asks how it is possible to love something he does not know, Augustine acknowledges it would be impossible for man to love something he was totally ignorant of <sup>228</sup>, but maintains that by loving what he knows of a certain thing (by obeying what is known) man is led on to a better and fuller knowledge of the said thing<sup>229</sup>. For this rule to hold with respect to God though, it is imperative that man’s initial conception of God is true otherwise man will simply progress deeper and deeper into error, not truth. True religion was so important to Augustine that he attacked false worship vociferously in *De civitate dei* by pointing out the immorality, impotence and other shortcomings of the Roman gods<sup>230</sup>.

23 What impressed Augustine most about Plato was his conception of God as unchanging<sup>231</sup>. This not only means that the truth God *is* is unchanging but that the joy

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<sup>225</sup> *conf.* 10.23.33

<sup>226</sup> Portalié p.306

<sup>227</sup> see Chapter 1.11

<sup>228</sup> *trin.* 10.1.1

<sup>229</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 96.4, *trin.* 10.1.2

<sup>230</sup> *civ.* 2.4, 4.8, 6.1

<sup>231</sup> *civ.* 8.11

of happiness based on this truth is also unchanging. In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* therefore, Augustine warns his congregation to beware of indulging their curiosity in the vain rejoicing of the world “all things pass away, fly away, and vanish like smoke; and woe to those who love such things! For every soul follows what it loves”<sup>232</sup>; in this case, to nothingness<sup>233</sup>. Later, Augustine reassures his hearers that though the wicked- those who “wish to prolong carnal joys, not to meditate on eternal joys” and who “seek human glory” alone- may appear to prosper and be happy, God does not “permit the wicked to be happy... but a bad man is thought to be happy, for this reason, because men are ignorant of what happiness is”<sup>234</sup>. For Augustine, the only happiness enjoyed by the “lovers of the world”<sup>235</sup>, is the fleeting and therefore false happiness of the three lusts of the world. This is why the Platonists were right to seek joy in the unchanging truth of eternity.

24 Unfortunately, bemoans Augustine regularly, in coming to know God as the unchanging truth of eternity, and as many other things besides, the Platonists failed to give God thanks for his self-revelation, accredited themselves with insight and so became puffed up with pride<sup>236</sup>. Error then led to error. They put the frustratingly transient experience of the truth which God is down to man’s flesh, rather than his pride. Consequently, “They sought a mediator to purify them” of their flesh, not their pride.

“It was a potent enticement for proud flesh that he [the devil] had no carnal body... But a mediator between God and the human race ought to have something in common with God and something in common with humanity. If the mediator were in both aspects like humanity [that is, mortal and sinful] he would be far distant from god. If he were in both aspects like God [that is, immortal and without sin], he would be far distant from humanity, and so would be no mediator”<sup>237</sup>.

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<sup>232</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 7:1, 2, 6, 24- Augustine is attacking the Hedonist celebration of the legend of a woman whose blood was sufficiently heavy to outweigh gold being celebrated in Hippo that same day

<sup>233</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 1.13

<sup>234</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 28.7

<sup>235</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 28.7-8

<sup>236</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 2.2-4

<sup>237</sup> *conf.* 10.42.67

This argument about false and true mediators is one which Augustine formulates frequently throughout his works<sup>238</sup>. Here in *Confessiones* 10, as in *De trinitate* 13<sup>239</sup> and *De civitate dei* 8<sup>240</sup>, it completes a discussion of the happy life.

25 Since pride precipitates all three lusts of the world, Augustine, in *De vera religione*, identifies “pride of spirit [as] the great obstacle to the acquiring of truth”<sup>241</sup>. In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 25, he champions humility not only as the antidote to pride but as the key needed to unlock the Delphic Motto: “Your whole humility is to know yourself”. Humility promises not only knowledge of oneself but knowledge of God because, “Whereas pride does its own will, humility does the will of God”<sup>242</sup>. By lovingly obeying what he knows of God’s commandments, the humble man is led on to a better and fuller knowledge of the truth God is<sup>243</sup>.

26 Hill reflects that for Augustine, “the platonic idea seen in the eternal truth consists much more of an ideal of behaviour or action, than of a definition of nature”<sup>244</sup>. This is because for Augustine the truth God is has to be loved and lived from. Humility alone makes this possible because only the humble man is ever-turned to God in thanksgiving for knowledge of himself and the Creator, and is ever-ready to show that thanks by obeying God’s will. Humility therefore comes to describe the way of true religion for Augustine<sup>245</sup>.

## WILL

27 After his examinations of natural and rational philosophy in *De civitate dei*, Augustine turns to consider:

“the moral section of philosophy (‘ethics’ in Greek) which discusses the question of the *Summum Bonum*, to which we refer all our actions, which we seek for its own sake, not for any ulterior end, and the attainment of which leaves us nothing more to seek for our happiness. For this reason it is

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<sup>238</sup> see Chapter 3.29-45 for a full discussion of the concept of ‘mediator’

<sup>239</sup> *trin.* 13.4 13-5.23

<sup>240</sup> *trin.* 8.11-23

<sup>241</sup> *vera rel.* 4.7 in Portalié p.107

<sup>242</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 25.16

<sup>243</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 96.4

<sup>244</sup> Hill trans. 2 p.283 note 19

<sup>245</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 13.4

called the 'end'; everything else we desire for the sake of this, this we desire for itself alone.

All [philosophical] schools must be ranked below those philosophers [the Platonists] who have found man's true Good not in the enjoyment of the body or the mind, but in the enjoyment of God"<sup>246</sup>.

To fulfil his desire to enjoy God and so be happy, a man must order all his loves to this end so he may use all things and people as God wishes. Augustine charges the responsibility for all this to man's will and so makes the will the fulcrum about which his entire moral and ethical thought turns. To appreciate Augustine's thought fully, some clarification of the terms he employs when discussing the will must first be made.

28 Bourke defines *amor* as a broad generic term for love implying any sort of attraction, psychic or physical; *dilectio* as applying to a high-minded love of intelligible or spiritual objects; *caritas* as the highest form of spiritual love, a love of God and of other realities as creatures of God<sup>247</sup>. After demonstrating how Augustine both distinguishes between *caritas*, *dilectio* and *amor* and uses them synonymously, O'Donovan observes:

"there is no *caritas* of evil or worldly things, but only *cupiditas*. The fact that scripture uses *caritas* to express the nature of God [1Jn. 4:8, 16] seems to impart an air of sanctity to the word. Between *dilectio* and *amor*, however, Augustine shows no clear resolve to distinguish... Yet we can easily observe that in the homiletic works he finds it easier to use *amor* than elsewhere. This surely suggests that considerations of style rather than of theological content are predominant"<sup>248</sup>.

These final remarks are borne out in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*. Throughout these homiletic works, Augustine speaks of love 'sighing', 'longing', 'running', 'panting', 'moaning' for God<sup>249</sup>. Less frequently, he speaks of love as life with or in God, or even as "the end: for this we run: to it we run; when we come to it we shall rest"<sup>250</sup>.

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<sup>246</sup> *civ.* 8.8

<sup>247</sup> Bourke p.35-36

<sup>248</sup> O'Donovan p.11

<sup>249</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 111.3, 68.3, 36.8, 4.20, *ep.Io.tr.* 6.8

<sup>250</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 10.4; 7.10; *Io.ev.tr.* 65.1



29 Augustine's easy use of *amor* disguises the distinction he draws between 'desire' and 'love' elsewhere in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and which he elaborates upon in *De trinitate*:

"love at present lies in longing desire, not yet in fullness of enjoyment"<sup>251</sup>;

"The same appetite with which one longs open-mouthed to know a thing becomes love of the thing known when it holds and embraces the acceptable offspring, that is its knowledge, and joins it to its begetter"<sup>252</sup>.

Desire and love represent different manifestations of the same appetite. Desire is characterised by:

"forward-straining, restless activity, never satisfied until it has reached its goal; whereas love, however much it may have this at times, has also a repose in it, and a satisfaction, so that we find in it our happiness, which we can never do in desire; and with this repose it has the great contemplative emotions, joy, admiration and wonder... We must say that so far as these contemplative emotions become added to desire and harmonised with it, it ceases to be merely desire and becomes love"<sup>253</sup>.

So then, in loving God, man rejoices in the knowledge he has of the Creator; by desiring God, man seeks to grow in this knowledge.

30 Man, though, could not love or desire God unless he first had some sort of knowledge of God to begin with<sup>254</sup>. Such knowledge, together with a certain understanding of various truths and universal principles, contends Augustine in *Confessiones*, is present in man's mind or memory. Unlike Plato, for whom the mind's knowledge of eternal realities arises from the reminiscence (*anamnesis*) of some pre-existent or pre-fallen state, Augustine suggests man's awareness of such things is due to God's continued presence to the soul<sup>255</sup>. From such knowledge arises man's love of and desire for intelligible and spiritual realities, his *dilectio*. This sort of innate love for something or someone Brown terms 'delight' and, he claims, "Augustine came to view 'delight' as the mainspring of human action"<sup>256</sup>. Delight is the first aspect of love and

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<sup>251</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 86.3

<sup>252</sup> *trin.* 9.3.18

<sup>253</sup> Shand in Burnaby p.84

<sup>254</sup> *trin.* 10.1.1

<sup>255</sup> *conf.* 10.8.12-10.27.38

<sup>256</sup> Brown p.154

desire is the second. Yet until love is perfected, man will never be able to delight in God fully and will always be subject to restless desire<sup>257</sup>.

31 *Caritas* perfects *amor* because, as Augustine explains in *In epistolam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, “It is by charity that other things come to be rightly loved”<sup>258</sup>. Augustine’s strict identification of charity as nothing “but the will”<sup>259</sup>, finds its most sublime expression in God- his will is perfect because he *is* charity. In contrast, man’s will is not perfect because he *is not* charity; man is not God. When equating will with charity for man then, Augustine is implying a man’s will equals his participation in charity, man’s share in the Life and Truth of God. So then, just as God’s righteousness relates to man’s virtue, God’s wisdom to man’s knowledge and God’s holiness to man’s love<sup>260</sup>, God’s charity relates to man’s will. God offers man the opportunity to participate in the divine attributes through the gift of charity; man takes up this invitation by submitting his imperfect will to God’s perfect charity.

32 The idea of love as a weight or gravitational force was put forward by Plotinus<sup>261</sup> and is employed regularly by Augustine<sup>262</sup> when he wishes to demonstrate that a man’s love can never be idle and either ascends by good desire to God or descends by evil desire to the lowest depths<sup>263</sup>. Man is strengthened to approach and become one with God by the Holy Spirit who pours into men’s hearts the love of God<sup>264</sup>. This is the Charity man must submit to if his will is to rightly order man’s delights and desires.

33 The central significance of the will to Augustine’s moral theory and applied ethics is clear and dictates the discussion of the happy life in *De trinitate* 13. This discussion is prompted by consideration of two desires frequently asserted and generally accepted: firstly, that “All wish to buy cheap and sell dear”; and secondly, that “All want to be praised”. In rejecting each in turn by providing examples to the contrary- firstly, that people often sell cheap and buy dear when seeking carnal gratification or political power; and, secondly, that many prefer necessary reprimands to glib praise- Augustine

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<sup>257</sup> *conf.* 1.1.1

<sup>258</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 7.1.

<sup>259</sup> *trin.* 15.5.38

<sup>260</sup> see Chapter 1.11

<sup>261</sup> see Chadwick ed. p.278 note 12, 13

<sup>262</sup> *conf.* 13.9.10, *civ.* 11.28

<sup>263</sup> *en.Ps.* 121.1, 122.1

illustrates how motivation shapes action, how will forms life. In each case a change in motivation leads to a change in action- for example, the lusts of the flesh and of worldly ambition can override those for financial gain. Yet, for Augustine, these changes in motivation and action do not signify a change in the fundamental desire of man for happiness but rather confirm that “all want to be happy, none unhappy”<sup>265</sup>. The only change to have taken place has been in the *belief* of the individual as to where happiness may be better gained or maximised.

34 Cicero too appreciated how belief directs will in the pursuit of happiness. He opens his *Hortensius* by explaining that though “all men have one common aim to obtain and retain happiness”<sup>266</sup> their ideas on how this may be done vary widely: for Epicurus, it means pursuing pleasure; for Zeno, it means cultivating virtue; and for others, something else again. Given this, says Augustine, some suggest that the happy life consists simply in “living according to one’s particular form of enjoyment”<sup>267</sup>. Cicero rejected such subjectivism on the grounds that to want what is not right is an unhappy situation- in fact it is worse than not obtaining what it is right to want. Augustine agrees:

“All who are happy have what they want, though not all who have what they want are *ipso facto* happy; but those who do not have what they want, or have what they have no right to want, are *ipso facto* unhappy. Thus no one is happy but the man who has everything he wants, and wants nothing wrongly”<sup>268</sup>.

This is why the will must order love, not indulge it. A man is made happy only by having “good things, not bad ones... one of these good things, one not to be underrated, [is] a good will... For the man who rightly wants whatever he wants is near to being happy, and when he gets them he will be happy”<sup>269</sup>.

35 In Augustine’s view, a good will admits no minimalism. He rejects the moral maxim proposed by Terence because the pragmatic capitulation it recommends is the product of despair:

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<sup>264</sup> Rom. 5:5

<sup>265</sup> *trin.* 13.2.6

<sup>266</sup> *trin.* 13.2.7

<sup>267</sup> *trin.* 13.2.8

<sup>268</sup> *trin.* 13.2.8

“Since what you will can never be, will what you can do’. Who would deny that this is very sensibly said? But it is advice given to an unhappy man how not to be unhappier still. To a happy man, however, such as all men want to be, it is neither right nor true to say *what you will can never be*. If he is indeed happy, whatever he wants can indeed be, since he does not want what cannot be. But such a state of things is not for this mortal life; it will only be when there is immortality”<sup>270</sup>.

Like Aristotle who decreed that happiness admits no incompleteness<sup>271</sup>, Augustine too makes immortality a necessary condition for happiness. Yet without *hope* of the former, pursuit of the latter is vain. The hope for immortality is not misplaced in the good will which desires all things rightly, continues Augustine, if human nature is capable of receiving such a gift from God<sup>272</sup>. Like his very being then, man’s happiness is dependent on the grace of God.

36 In this journey towards happiness, the will’s ordering of man’s loves can be examined in terms of the will’s ordering of man’s delights and desires. From personal experience Augustine learned that by allowing himself to be drawn to Lady Continence his “old loves”, the “force of [sexual] habit”, were slowly broken. The delights of continence precipitated a desire for them and so stimulated a movement toward them and away from the slavery of carnal lust<sup>273</sup>. In moving man forward to his professed delights, desire<sup>274</sup> helps man come to a fuller understanding of those delights. Greater understanding of the delights prompts greater desire for them and a further move forward in understanding. In this way, moral purification leads to intellectual purification- providing that a man’s delights and desires are good.

37 In *De trinitate*, Augustine, after describing how in general life one thing is willed for the sake of something else (a scar to prove a wound, a window to see passers-by), states:

“Now all wills or wishes are straight, and all the ones linked with them too, if the one to which they are all referred to is good; but if that is bent then

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<sup>269</sup> *trin.* 13.2.9

<sup>270</sup> *trin.* 13.3.10; cf. *civ.* 14.25

<sup>271</sup> Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* I p.23

<sup>272</sup> *trin.* 13.3.11

<sup>273</sup> *conf.* 8.11.26, 27

they all are bent. And thus a sequence of straight wishes or wills is a ladder for those who would climb to happiness, to be negotiated by definite steps; but a skein of bent and twisted wishes or wills is a rope to bind anyone who acts so”<sup>275</sup>.

So man may come to his *Summum Bonum* when his will is to delight in God and to desire to obey his commandments. In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* therefore, Augustine urges his congregation to run to God by continual prayer and devotion<sup>276</sup>, by believing in their hearts<sup>277</sup> and caring with their hands<sup>278</sup>.

38 In both *De civitate dei* 14 and *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 60, Augustine insists that being alive with and alert to emotion is as important to man’s moral well-being as healthy sensation is to his physical well-being:

“if *apatheia* is the name of the state in which the mind cannot be touched by any emotion whatsoever, who could not judge this insensitivity to be the worst of all moral defects?

[T]hey rather lose every shred of humanity than achieve a true tranquillity”<sup>279</sup>.

Away with the reasons of the philosophers, who assert that a wise man is not affected by mental perturbations... the error of Stoic philosophers, and all resembling them: who indeed, just as they esteem truth to be vanity, regard insensibility as soundness; not knowing that a man’s mind, like the limbs of his body, is only the more helplessly diseased when it has lost even the feeling of pain”<sup>280</sup>.

Though neither a sentimentalist nor a pure mystic<sup>281</sup>, Augustine condemns any attempts to neutralise or crush emotion as un-natural and therefore injurious to man’s well-being: “the healthy man is one in whom knowledge and feeling have become united; and only

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<sup>274</sup> see Chapter 1.29

<sup>275</sup> *trin.* 11.2.10

<sup>276</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 12.14

<sup>277</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 26.3

<sup>278</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 5.5, 12

<sup>279</sup> *civ.* 14.9

<sup>280</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 60.3

<sup>281</sup> Portalié p.306-7

such a man is capable of allowing himself to be ‘drawn’ to act by the sheer irresistible pleasure of the object of his love<sup>282</sup>. In the happy man, emotion and action are one.

39 In *De civitate dei*, Augustine describes the four ‘emotions’ of fear, desire, joy and sadness in terms, firstly, of will and, secondly, of love<sup>283</sup>. At one point in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* he refers to four ‘mental perturbations’ of fear, sorrow, love and gladness<sup>284</sup> and at another he declares, “Our affections are the motions of our minds. Joy is the expansion of the mind; sorrow, contraction of the mind; desire, a forward movement of the mind; and fear, the flight of the mind”<sup>285</sup>. Through the slightly inconsistent terminology two complementary pairs of emotions emerge: joy and sorrow, fear and desire. All represent acts of will by the mind. In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, Augustine describes how the good will regulates all the emotions by referring each to God: the good will rejoices in the knowledge of God that makes for eternal life<sup>286</sup>, sorrows over men who seek pleasure in the world<sup>287</sup>, fears itself being abandoned by God<sup>288</sup> and desires all should be equal under God<sup>289</sup>.

40 Augustine’s own struggle with carnal continence taught him that the pursuit of happiness demands a wholehearted will. Such a will finds its enjoyment in God alone and so orders all its loves to the Holy One. By using all things and situations with respect to the *Summum Bonum* God is, a ladder of will is formed by which man may ascend to his Creator. By directing both his knowledge and his longings to God, a man’s will becomes whole in itself and so holy like God<sup>290</sup> albeit imperfectly holy. Augustine maintains that man thirsts for Truth and Life in the first instance only because God impressed these images of himself in man’s mind when creating him. The will’s innate delight in the divine attributes precipitates a desire to grow in them. In eternity, Augustine assures his congregation in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, “all that can satisfy us will be revealed to our eyes. But here let us always be seeking, and

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<sup>282</sup> Brown p.374

<sup>283</sup> *civ.* 14.6, 7

<sup>284</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 60.3

<sup>285</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 47.8, cf. *conf.* 10.14.22, Chadwick ed. p.191 note 18

<sup>286</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 105.3

<sup>287</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 7.2

<sup>288</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 9.5-6

<sup>289</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 8.5

<sup>290</sup> *Lev.* 11.44-45, 19.2, 20.26

let our reward in finding put no end to our searching”<sup>291</sup>. The hope of participating in God’s eternal righteousness, wisdom and holiness will not be disappointed, because God has given his own life of charity to men<sup>292</sup>. Divine charity makes up whatever is lacking in man’s will and thereby enables man to pursue happiness through virtue, knowledge and love.

## CONCLUSION

41 Far from being mutually exclusive of one another, the source and summit of Plato’s three divisions of philosophy are one and the same: “the supreme and true God... the author of all created things, the light of knowledge, the Final good of all activity”<sup>293</sup>. Augustine’s trinity of mind both reflects and develops such thinking: man’s mind becomes wise by remembering, understanding and willing not itself but its Creator<sup>294</sup>. The first and most crucial movement in this process is that of the will: does it turn to God in humility or to itself in pride?

42 According to Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 26, the will desires nothing more strongly than the truth because truth enables man to eat and drink of righteousness, wisdom and eternity; that is, of God<sup>295</sup>. However, as God does not condescend to be possessed together with falsehood of any kind<sup>296</sup>, if a man’s will for truth is lacking the charity to observe the precepts of righteousness which truth dictates, that man will become puffed up with pride and hence a prey to the three lusts of the world. This is why the spectre of knowledge without love became such a concern for Augustine<sup>297</sup>.

43 False or hypocritical love also angered Augustine. This is exemplified by the man who observes the precepts of righteousness in order either, to win other men’s admiration or confidence or, most perversely, to prove his goodness to God and so be rewarded. Such a man may succeed in deceiving his fellow man but in attempting to

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<sup>291</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 63.1.

<sup>292</sup> Rom. 5:5

<sup>293</sup> *civ.* 8.9

<sup>294</sup> *trin.* 14.5.15

<sup>295</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 26.5.

<sup>296</sup> *conf.* 10.41.66

<sup>297</sup> see Chapter 3.11

deceive God, who as truth cannot deceive or be deceived<sup>298</sup>, he will succeed only in deceiving himself. In each case, as in that of obeying through fear<sup>299</sup>, man's will is deficient in charity.

44 The charity which is poured into men's hearts by the Holy Spirit and enables the will to order its loves rightly and so become holy, gradually conforms human virtue to divine righteousness and temporal knowledge to eternal wisdom. To receive this gift of God, states Augustine in *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, a man must empty out all his worldly loves<sup>300</sup>. This requires humble confession<sup>301</sup>. Humility is the first rung on Augustine's ladder of wills leading to God<sup>302</sup> because by priming man to remember, understand and will not himself but God, humility helps man to come to know himself in the light of God. Augustine therefore looks for a mediator who will purify man of his pride, not his body, through the commendation of humility<sup>303</sup>.

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<sup>298</sup> *en.Ps.* 123.2

<sup>299</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 8.9

<sup>300</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 2.8-9

<sup>301</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 1.6

<sup>302</sup> *trin.* 11.3.10

<sup>303</sup> *trin.* 8.5.11



## CHAPTER 2: THE FALL

### INTRODUCTION

1 To become wise by remembering, understanding and willing not himself but God, man, determines Augustine in *De trinitate*, must “worship the uncreated God”<sup>304</sup>. “It is our task to consider what men or books we should believe that we may worship God correctly”<sup>305</sup>. The men and books Augustine thought ought to be believed with regard to the true worship of God were those guaranteed by the authority of the Catholic Church<sup>306</sup>. On such authority, decrees Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, “man was made in the image of God, and has a rational mind, by which he can perceive wisdom;” but man’s vision of “God [who] is that wisdom” is blinded by “sins and iniquities”<sup>307</sup>. This unhappy situation arose because man “consented to evil... For [Satan] cast man down, not by violence, not by assault, but by his own will”<sup>308</sup>. Man’s evil will precipitated his Fall and it is *fallen man* who is the subject of Augustine’s moral theory.

### CREATION

2 Ancient myths, patristic hexaemeron and scientific theories all bear testimony to man’s fascination with creation before, during and since Augustine’s time. Regarding allegorical and spiritual interpretations of Scripture’s Garden of Eden, Augustine says in *De civitate dei*, “There is no prohibition against such exegesis, provided that we also believe in the truth of the story as a faithful record of historical fact”<sup>309</sup>. Many today who would not necessarily accept the story told in Genesis as ‘historical fact’ nevertheless do still agree that Genesis does express “the truths of creation- its origin and its end in God, its order and goodness, the vocation of man, and finally the drama of sin and the hope of salvation”<sup>310</sup>. It is Augustine’s understanding of the ‘truths of creation’ that is discussed below.

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<sup>304</sup> *trin.* 14.5.15

<sup>305</sup> *vera rel.* 24.46 in Portalié p.116

<sup>306</sup> see Introduction 5

<sup>307</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 1.18, 19

<sup>308</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 2.8

<sup>309</sup> *civ.* 13.21

<sup>310</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Paragraph 289 Geoffrey Chapman, London 1994

3 Regarding no book as being richer in Christian mystery than Genesis when properly interpreted, Augustine began no less than five distinct expositions of it<sup>311</sup>. He makes no systematic examination of Genesis in either *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* or *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* but throughout these works he does assert frequently the truths he believes the Genesis accounts convey. Since Augustine sets forth many of his principal ideas on creation and the fall in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 41-44, this series of homilies will be used to introduce these themes that were so important to Augustine.

4 Ever-mindful of “the heresy of the Manicheans” which claimed that the devil derived his being, and man his flesh, from “a certain principle of evil,” Augustine, in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 42, distinguishes clearly between the fundamental goodness of God’s creation and the cause of man’s fallen state. “For every nature is good; but man’s nature has been corrupted by an evil will. What God made cannot be evil, if man were not [a cause] of evil to himself”<sup>312</sup>. Augustine draws out this distinction in *De fide spe et caritate*: “All beings were made good, but not being made perfectly good, are liable to corruption... [E]vil, insofar as it is evil, is not a good; yet the fact that evil as well as good exists, is a good. For if it were not a good that evil should exist, its existence would not be permitted by the omnipotent God”<sup>313</sup>. While the things God made are good because they were made by him the one unchanging Good, observes Augustine in *De civitate dei*, “they are subject to change, because they were made not out of his being but out of nothing”<sup>314</sup>.

5 From the beginning of *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* Augustine urges his listeners to “Understand that God made all things and arranged them in their orders”<sup>315</sup>. Unfortunately, “[God’s] miracles in the government of the whole world and the administration of the universal creation are, by their familiar constancy, slightly regarded, so that almost no man deigns to consider the wonderful and stupendous works of God, exhibited in every grain of seed”<sup>316</sup>. Miracles as ordinarily understood, remarks Augustine, represent a divine condescension to human limitations. The order of the

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<sup>311</sup> Chadwick ed. p.xxiv note 3

<sup>312</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 42.10

<sup>313</sup> *ench.* 12, 96

<sup>314</sup> *civ.* 12.1, 12.8

<sup>315</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 1.15

natural environment reveals the power and wisdom of God and should inspire man's awe and worship of the creator<sup>317</sup>. While acknowledging that God continues to work miracles through the ministry of men and angels, Augustine nevertheless insists "man is a greater miracle than any miracle effected by man's agency"<sup>318</sup>.

6 Throughout his works Augustine maintains that the wonder of man's being stems from his being made in the image of God; an image impressed "In the mind, in the intellect"<sup>319</sup>. So, continues Augustine elsewhere in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, though brute beasts have souls and enjoy God's mercy at present, they have neither the ability to perceive wisdom<sup>320</sup> nor the hope of future salvation<sup>321</sup>. Man alone enjoys such privileges because only he has "a rational intelligent soul"<sup>322</sup>. God enlivens both the rational and non-rational parts of man's soul but, as Augustine points out in *De trinitate*, man is enkindled with the love of God and enlightened with his truth through "that which is chief in the soul, that is called the mind"<sup>323</sup>. It is well to note the distinctions made here between 'soul' and 'mind' by Augustine because he does not always distinguish so clearly between these terms.

7 In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, Augustine invites his hearers to reflect upon the various powers of the human soul to know its creator, to distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong, to animate the body, and to observe and enjoy laws, manners, arts and orderly citizenship<sup>324</sup>. "But our soul, my brethren, is unlovely by reason of iniquity: by loving God it becomes lovely... By loving Him who is always lovely. As the love increases in you, so the loveliness increases: for love is itself the beauty of the soul"<sup>325</sup>. In preaching that man helps renew the image of God in himself by loving God<sup>326</sup>, Augustine is in effect reiterating his earlier philosophical contentions that man comes to

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<sup>316</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 24.1

<sup>317</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 8.1

<sup>318</sup> *civ.* 10.12, 22.8-10

<sup>319</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 3.4

<sup>320</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 19.18, 1.18

<sup>321</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 30.3, 34.4

<sup>322</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 47.9

<sup>323</sup> *trin.* 15.7.11

<sup>324</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 8.2

<sup>325</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 9.9

<sup>326</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 65.1

happiness when he remembers, understands and wills God<sup>327</sup>. Pastorally or philosophically, Augustine maintains that the transformation of the image of God, for better or worse, begins in the will.

8 For Augustine then, “all things are good, because a good God made all things”<sup>328</sup>; “[God] has ordered all things in measure, and in number, and in weight”<sup>329</sup>; and “from [God’s beauty] are all thing beautiful”<sup>330</sup>. “And the *species* or ‘form’ which is the secret of this beauty is the unity of design, a unity in multiplicity, that speaks of the One Designer, the voice by which mute creation proclaims its maker”<sup>331</sup>. By being willing to listen to and obey the voice of the creator, man, Augustine argues, gradually comes to recognise how God’s goodness, truth and beauty is reflected in creation in general and in man in particular. Unfortunately, as Augustine observes in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 42, man has not always been willing to listen to, or obey, his Creator<sup>332</sup>.

## FALL OF ADAM

9 In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 42, Augustine traces man’s disordered will back to Satan, who “by disobedience and pride, fell as an angel, and became a devil.” The devil then turned “his ill-will to man, [and] assuming the guise of a serpent, spoke to the woman, and from the woman instilled his poison into the man. They died by listening to the devil, whom they would not have listened to had they but listened to the Lord; for man, having his place between Him who created and him who was fallen, ought to have obeyed the Creator, not the deceiver”<sup>333</sup>. The dynamics of these events—pride, disobedience, envy and the bad will which precipitates each—came to shape Augustine’s world view. Consequently a solid grasp of Augustine’s understanding of the Fall of Adam is vital for a true appreciation of his moral and ethical thought. To do this the roles of Satan, Eve and Adam will be considered in turn.

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<sup>327</sup> see Chapter 1.37, 41-44

<sup>328</sup> *en.Ps.* 128.5

<sup>329</sup> Wis. 11:21 in *Io.ev.tr.* 1.13

<sup>330</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 4.5

<sup>331</sup> *vera rel.* 59f in Burnaby p.157

<sup>332</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 42.13

<sup>333</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 42.10, 11

10 Augustine is adamant that Satan and the rebellious angels “were created good but have become evil by their own bad will.” Their *turning* from God (not what they turned to) is what is perverse and the punishment which follows is just because the turning was voluntary, not necessary<sup>334</sup>. “What other name is there for this fault than pride? ‘The beginning of all sin is pride’[Eccl. 10:13]<sup>335</sup>”.

11 Envyman’s unfallen standing, the fallen Satan, alleges Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, “administered to man that cup of pride by which he himself was cast down”<sup>336</sup>. What motivated Satan’s tempting, declares Augustine in *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, was the lust for domination: “for whomsoever the devil makes proud, he overcomes”<sup>337</sup>. For Augustine then, whilst pride seeks Lordship or domination of oneself and so disorders man’s relationship with God, envy seeks Lordship or domination of other rational creatures and thereby disorders man’s relationship with his neighbour.

12 In describing the process of man’s Fall in *De Genesi ad litteram*, Augustine depicts Adam as being intellectually mature and portrays Eve, not yet instructed by Adam, as being naive and gullible. She it is who succumbs to Satan’s temptation and Adam, not wishing to abandon his wife, falls through his concern for her<sup>338</sup>. Somewhat similarly in *De civitate dei*, Augustine says it was not Adam but Eve who was seduced by Satan- she was deceived into accepting “the serpent’s statement as the truth, while Adam refused to be separated from his only companion, even if it involved sharing her sin”<sup>339</sup>. Though these interpretations certainly refer to Eve as “the inferior of the human pair,” the reader should not think Augustine thought men to be superior to women. Several years before Augustine penned either of the above interpretations and very much against the norms of his own patriarchal society, he declares in *Confessiones* that “Woman has an equal capacity for rational intelligence... and spiritual judgement”<sup>340</sup>. Much later too, towards the end of *De civitate dei*, Augustine insists that a woman’s sex is natural, not defective, it is retained in heaven and its creation out

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<sup>334</sup> *civ.* 12.9, 6, 8

<sup>335</sup> *civ.* 12.6

<sup>336</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 17.16, *civ.* 14.11

<sup>337</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 7.2

<sup>338</sup> “by the sort of attachment and affection by which it often happens that we offend God while we try to keep the friendship of men”- *Gn.Litt.* 11.42.59

<sup>339</sup> *civ.* 14.12, 1Tim. 2:14

of man simply emphasises the unity between human beings<sup>341</sup>. Furthermore, according to Hill, Augustine's symbolic exegesis of the Genesis story in *De trinitate* 12 is designed to interpret 1Cor. 11.7 in such way as "to maintain the equality of women as human beings with men, and their equal status as made to the image of God"<sup>342</sup>.

13 In *De trinitate* 12, Augustine himself expressly states his aim to qualify previous interpreters<sup>343</sup> who "have said that the man stands for the mind and the woman for the senses of the body" because he wanted the woman to stand for something the beasts do not have<sup>344</sup>. Augustine recommends interpreting the serpent as representing the senses of the body (sensation), the woman as that part of reason to which knowledge of changeable and temporal things belongs (action) and the man as that part of reason to which understanding of unchangeable and eternal things belongs (contemplation). He determines that the active reason does right when it refers "the bodily things that are perceived by bodily sensation... to the highest good as their end... [but acts badly when using them] for self-enjoyment." So though thinking about unlawful pleasures is a lesser sin than actually indulging in them physically the consent (to contemplate or to act) in each case is given by contemplative reason: "one cannot say that 'the woman' in [the sinner] is condemned without 'the man'. A ridiculous idea. This after all is one person"<sup>345</sup>. Whether Augustine observes the noble intentions of *De trinitate* 12 in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 15 is questionable. Therein he compares the woman without a husband to a soul without understanding but complicates the analogy by referring to understanding, on the one hand, as the higher part of reason and, on the other, as reason itself<sup>346</sup>.

14 Whatever actual or symbolic roles Adam and Eve played in the Garden of Eden, what they singularly failed to do, remarks Augustine in *De trinitate* 12, was resist the slow swelling of pride in their wills: "For just as a snake does not walk with open

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<sup>340</sup> *conf.* 13.32.47, 23.33

<sup>341</sup> *civ.* 22.17.-18

<sup>342</sup> Hill trans. 2 p.339 note 27- "[That] what woman symbolises [in the mind] as female is subordinate to what man symbolises as male... [does not mean] that what woman is as person is subordinate, let alone inferior to what man is as person, or that men do not engage as much, if not more, in the 'feminine' function of mind as do women"

<sup>343</sup> Like Ambrose in *De Noe er Arca* according to Hill trans. 2 p.340 note 55

<sup>344</sup> *trin.* 12.3.20

<sup>345</sup> *trin.* 12.4.17-19

<sup>346</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 15.19-22

strides but wriggles along with tiny little movements of its scales, so the careless glide little by little along the slippery path of failure, and beginning from a distorted appetite for being like God they end up by becoming like beasts”<sup>347</sup>. Developing this same point in *De civitate dei* in much more sober language, Augustine says Adam’s false exaltation of himself over God led to “some open and obvious sin”<sup>348</sup>. Pride inevitably leads to disobedience and “the retribution for disobedience is disobedience itself... because man would not do what he could, he now wills to do what he cannot”<sup>349</sup>.

15 Augustine claims that if Adam and Eve had submitted to God with dutiful obedience, they would have passed over into “endless felicity, without an intervening death... whereas if disobedient they would be justly condemned to the punishment of death”<sup>350</sup>. Quite simply, observes Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, since God had created all things to be, death was not of his fashioning, but entered human experience only as a result and wage of sin<sup>351</sup>.

16 The reason why Adam and Eve, or any other human being for that matter, died after listening to the devil is because “He is both a liar, and the father of lies.” Throughout *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 42 and 43, Augustine is keen to stress that while the devil “begot his own falsehood” men are begotten as children of the false one by imitating him. Man must fear the devil because through his ability to lead men into error Satan has the power to kill both body and soul. The devil became the father of lies when he refused to abide in the truth of God<sup>352</sup>. Similarly, remarks Augustine when dealing with the same theme in *De civitate dei*, when man lives by his own standard rather than God’s “then inevitably he lives by the standard of falsehood”<sup>353</sup>. As with Adam and Eve, explains Augustine in *De trinitate*, any man who refuses to be governed by God and his laws starts to refer things to himself and so begins to pursue the three lusts of the world<sup>354</sup>. Death awaits the man “living by the rule of self”<sup>355</sup>.

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<sup>347</sup> *trin.* 12.3.16

<sup>348</sup> *civ.* 14.12

<sup>349</sup> *civ.* 14.13.15

<sup>350</sup> *civ.* 12.22, 13; *trin.* 13.4.16

<sup>351</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 3.8-10

<sup>352</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 42.1, 10-13, 43.11-12

<sup>353</sup> *civ.* 4.4

<sup>354</sup> *trin.* 12.3.15

<sup>355</sup> *civ.* 4.3

17 Augustine then holds that both the disobedience born of moral pride and the false living born of intellectual pride lead to death. In the accounts of each just cited, two very significant dynamics of Augustine's moral theory are contained. Firstly, lack of will. To defect from God to something of less reality, explains Augustine, "is to begin to have an evil will. To try to discover the causes of such defection- deficient, not efficient causes- is like trying to see darkness or hear silence." As man is familiar with such things "not by perception but by the absence of perception," so, Augustine maintains, man can be aware of evil through the sins an evil will commits<sup>356</sup>. Augustine always claims that sin begins in the will, but never claims to be able to explain how or why- this is the mystery of evil. Secondly, infirmity and ignorance. Man may not be able to prevent the advent of evil's temptations, but he must not dwell on them, actively or passively. By "idle meditation" on its lusts for carnal pleasure, curiosity and superiority, the soul, observes Augustine in *De trinitate* 12, gradually becomes "loaded with error and... emptied of strength"<sup>357</sup>. In other words, man's understanding is lessened and his will weakened. Augustine identifies such ignorance and infirmity as the cause of all subsequent sin<sup>358</sup>.

18 Being made in the image of God, man, male and female, argues Augustine clearly in *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, is able to apprehend God, to distinguish between right and wrong, and to praise his Creator<sup>359</sup>. In preferring pride to prudence though, Adam forfeited many of his innate spiritual, intellectual and moral capacities; and all human beings since have "by evil lusts worn out in themselves the image of God"<sup>360</sup>. Augustine insists that man remains better than the beasts, but by deforming the image of God in man, sin diminishes his ability to remember, understand and will God. It is because sin obstructs man's pursuit of happiness that Augustine always maintains that sin, not the body or anything else, is what must be removed if man is to enjoy God.

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<sup>356</sup> *civ.* 12.7; cf. *ench.* 24

<sup>357</sup> *trin.* 12.3.15-16

<sup>358</sup> *ench.* 81, Rom 6:23

<sup>359</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 8.6

<sup>360</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 8.6



19 By casting Adam's imitation of the devil in varying terms of pride, disobedience and not standing in the truth<sup>361</sup>, *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 42 reveals the intimate connections between will, virtue and truth in Augustine's thought. While the evil behind Adam's turning from God will always remain a mystery, Augustine is convinced that fallen man, having been justly punished for imitating Satan's attempt to establish a false equality with God, now seeks a false superiority over his neighbour. Such envy is characteristic of the avaricious nature of pride which, by being greedy for more than what is justly due, is the root of all evils<sup>362</sup>. As man's descent into the nothingness of sin and death began in the will, with its aversion from God, Augustine's moral theory concentrates on man's disordered will. Its corrupt nature, observes Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, is witnessed to by man's "inner strife... one law in his members warring against the law of the mind"<sup>363</sup>. This does not mean there is a will in the body fighting a will in the mind, but rather, as Augustine himself experienced so painfully:

"there are two wills [in the mind]. Neither of them is complete, and what is present in one is lacking in the other... [To serve God] I was neither wholly willing nor wholly unwilling... it was 'not I' that brought this about 'but sin dwelt in me'<sup>364</sup>, sin resulting from the punishment of a more freely chosen sin, because I was a son of Adam"<sup>365</sup>.

## ORIGINAL SIN

20 "Adam was made by God: but when he consented to the devil, he was begotten of the devil; and he begot all men as he was himself. With lust we were born; even before we add our sins, from that condemnation we have our birth. For if we are born without any sin, why is there this running with infants to baptism that they may be released?"<sup>366</sup>.

These declarations of Augustine in *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* provide a compact summary of the nature and transmission of original sin that so dominated his conception of human nature since the Fall.

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<sup>361</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 42.10,11

<sup>362</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 8.8, 6

<sup>363</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 34.10, cf. *civ.* 13.13

<sup>364</sup> Rom. 7:17, 20

<sup>365</sup> *conf.* 8.9.21-10.22

21 In succumbing to Satan's temptation, Adam was transferred from God's kingdom of light into the devil's realm of darkness. Adam thereby forfeited the goodness, truth and beauty in which he had been created and descended into disobedience, ignorance and infirmity. This fallen nature is all Adam had left to pass on to his descendants. For Augustine, the lust man is born with is the corrupt nature of the fallen Adam. As such a nature belongs to the devil's realm of darkness, man therefore enters the world in a state of separation from God- this is the state of Original Sin; and since disobedience, ignorance and infirmity characterise the corruption of the nature, there is a tendency in man for further sin- this is the legacy of concupiscence. Divine justice, maintains Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, decrees that all "have inherited by generation... original sin" and are "compelled to endure" its residual effects of concupiscence throughout their lives:

"it was the first sin that caused [man's] falling into such misery. For the penalty is more protracted than the fault; lest the fault should be accounted small, were the penalty to end with itself... For it comes from the righteous anger of God... [which] is not like that of man, the disturbance of an excited man, but the calm fixing of righteous punishment"<sup>367</sup>.

22 The juridical side of original sin- namely, the guilt of the crime- rests on the theory of seminal identity Augustine sets out in works such as *De civitate dei*: "the whole human race was in that first man... [because in him] there already existed the seminal nature from which we were to be begotten. And of course, when this was vitiated through sin, and bound with death's fetters in just condemnation, man could not be born in any other condition"<sup>368</sup>. Bonner points out that Augustine's theory of seminal identity- which drew on the work of Cyprian, Ambrose and, most significantly, Ambrosiaster- does not depend upon reading Rom. 5:12 as "in whom all sinned" but on combining a literal interpretation of the biblical account of the Fall with an acceptance "of how moral responsibility can be incurred by a being which exists, as yet, only in potentiality"<sup>369</sup>. Bonner goes on to say that the transmissional side of original sin- that is, the penalty of the disease- rests: "On a foundation of physiological fact, erroneously

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<sup>366</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 4.11

<sup>367</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 124.5

<sup>368</sup> *civ.* 13.3, 14 –Augustine's ideas here find their context in ancient debates on the origin of the soul. He himself remained undecided between creationism and traducianism cf *ep.* 166 to Jerome

<sup>369</sup> Bonner 1 p.373-4

explained [that in Paradise man had the same control over his sexual organs as he has today over his hand or foot], and a sense of shame [regarding nakedness and the loss of control] accurately observed and probably rightly associated with the physiological fact... [The element of concupiscence that] has come into human sexuality since the Fall which is both a consequence and a cause of sin... [and] is present even in the legitimate sexuality of Christian marriage”<sup>370</sup>. Hill explains that this latter concern of Augustine arose because “for him the disorder consequent on the fall is most evident in the sexual act, in which the inherent concupiscence is not under the control of reason”<sup>371</sup>.

23 Some of the above views have led some to interpret Augustine as saying that original sin is passed on somehow materially and that sexual intercourse within marriage is wrong. Following Portalié, Bourke rightly discards:

“‘this gross misinterpretation’ popularised by Fulgentius [of Ruspe] and Peter Lombard [in *Sentences* which] is at odds with Augustine’s own explanation in the *Incomplete work against Julian* [6.22]. There Augustine used the idea of a spiritual participation by the heirs of Adam, in the original sinful guilt, paralleling the manner in which the heirs of Christ, through baptism, participate in the righteousness of Christ”<sup>372</sup>.

For Augustine then, the reverse side of the doctrine of original sin is that of salvation in Christ<sup>373</sup>; from the lump of sin that perished in Adam<sup>374</sup> is formed a body of charity in Christ<sup>375</sup>.

24 The Catholic Church of which Augustine was a member continues to teach as he did that original sin “is a sin which will be transmitted by propagation to all mankind, that is, by the transmission of a human nature deprived of original holiness and justice,” whilst simultaneously acknowledging that “the transmission of original sin is a mystery we cannot fully understand”<sup>376</sup>. The consistency in teaching is not altogether surprising though, because Augustine no more invented the doctrine of original sin than he did the

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<sup>370</sup> Bonner 1 p.375

<sup>371</sup> Hill trans. 2 p.337-8 note 2

<sup>372</sup> Bourke p.11-12

<sup>373</sup> Bonner 2 III p.502; cf. Chapter 4.33

<sup>374</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 4.10

<sup>375</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 10.3

<sup>376</sup> op. cit. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Paragraph 404

practice of infant baptism. Since both were part of the church he joined, Augustine readily invokes the latter practice as justification in itself for respecting the gravity of the former doctrine<sup>377</sup> and points to Cyprian and Ambrose as being his instructors in these matters<sup>378</sup>.

25 While always seeking to reassure his hearers in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* that “out of the mass, which has all perished in Adam, are formed vessels of mercy,” Augustine never glosses over the uncomfortable truth that human nature “through free-will had become corrupted at its source... And if you imitate the devil, in such a way as to become proud and impious against God, you will become a child of the devil”<sup>379</sup>. Man’s consequent enslavement to Satan and servitude to sin, explains Augustine in *De trinitate*, owes itself to “a kind of divine justice [by which] the human race was handed over to the power of the devil for the sin of the first man”<sup>380</sup>. The manner in which God’s righteousness overcame the devil and liberated man is discussed below<sup>381</sup>. For now, the inheritance of a corrupted will is examined through man’s personal sin.

## PERSONAL SIN

26 In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 44, Augustine states that:

“through the first man sinning moral evil rooted itself in us as a nature. If evil has so taken root within us, every man is born mentally blind... from [Adam] we all draw our origin, not only in respect of death, but also of unrighteousness”<sup>382</sup>.

This legacy of concupiscence- an evil will, confused understanding and immoral life- means that for fallen man sin is as inevitable as dirty feet- like physical cleanliness, baptismal purity is lost in the midst of everyday activity<sup>383</sup>. All men therefore are subject to the horror, futility and perversity of sin:

“An evil conscience cannot flee from itself; it has no place to go; it follows itself. [The sinner] cannot withdraw from himself, for the sin he commits is

<sup>377</sup> see Chapter 2.20, *ep.Io.tr.* 4.11

<sup>378</sup> *c.Iul.imp.* 6.18, 7.21

<sup>379</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 4.10, *ep.Io.tr.* 10.3

<sup>380</sup> *trin.* 13.4.16

<sup>381</sup> see Chapter 3.36-37

<sup>382</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 44.1

<sup>383</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 56.5

within... What delighted is gone; the sting has remained behind. Evil bondage!... ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, every one who commits sin is the servant of sin’<sup>384</sup>. Miserable slavery!’<sup>385</sup>.

27 An evil conscience has no place to flee to because, explains Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, “if you will put your sin behind yourself, God will thrust it back before your face... [I]f a sinner says that he is a just man, there is guile in his mouth... he is hopelessly sick, incurable”<sup>386</sup>. Herein lies the true horror of sin for Augustine- if a man does not confess his sins he cannot be cured of them and so makes himself vulnerable to “the second death, death eternal, the death of hell, the death of damnation with the devil and his angels. *This is real death*”<sup>387</sup>.

28 Augustine believes the transitory nature of sin’s delights renders sin itself utterly futile. Committing sin to experience earth’s passing pleasures, he reflects in *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, means “you have offended God for nothing”<sup>388</sup>. This moral assertion is rooted in the metaphysical convictions spelt out in the opening tractate of *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*: “Understand that God made all things and arranged them in their orders... Sin [though] was not made by Him; and it is plain that sin is nothing, and men become nothing when they sin”<sup>389</sup>. For Augustine, sin is as intellectually indefensible as it is morally reprehensible. Through sin, man merely exhibits and exacerbates his ignorance.

29 For Augustine, the perversity of sin lies in the fact that man, in exercising his freedom to sin, decreases rather than increases his overall freedom. Occasionally Augustine speaks of the internal bondage endured by the sinner in terms of enslavement to the devil<sup>390</sup>, but because the devil could have “brought in nothing” without man’s consent<sup>391</sup> Augustine more regularly emphasises the sinner’s servitude to sin itself<sup>392</sup>. Such servitude, maintains Augustine throughout *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, is

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<sup>384</sup> Jn. 8.34

<sup>385</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 41.3

<sup>386</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 12.13, 7.18; cf. Introduction 18, *conf.* 8.7.16

<sup>387</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 43.11

<sup>388</sup> *en.Ps.* 123.9, 124.3

<sup>389</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 1.15, 13

<sup>390</sup> *civ.* 14.15

<sup>391</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 12.10

<sup>392</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 41.3

experienced in the will because man consented to Satan in the will<sup>393</sup>. In turning away from God, “every man twists for himself a rope by his sins” and lengthens this rope each time he covers one sin with another (theft with astrology, astrology with hate, hate with division) until, “With their own sins are men bound and cast out into outer darkness”<sup>394</sup>. Similarly, the man who indulges himself in one particular sin (like avarice for earthly riches) remains “tied and bound with his lusts”<sup>395</sup>. Such a rope of twisted strands is the opposite of the ladder of straight wills Augustine recommends man construct if he wishes to be happy<sup>396</sup>.

30 Having inherited a corrupt nature from Adam, fallen man cannot escape the horror, futility and perversity of sin. What man must not do though, warns Augustine in *De fide spe et caritate*, is to become familiar with his sins: “constant familiarity leads to the toleration of them all, and habitual toleration leads to the practice of many of them”<sup>397</sup>. Rather, advises Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, fallen man should confront the reality of his depravity by confessing both “great and deadly sins, such crimes as murder, theft, adultery... [and] minute sins, of tongue, or of thought, or of intemperance in things permitted... since many minute sins, if they be neglected, kill”<sup>398</sup>. As the humility required for confession of sins is completed in active charity<sup>399</sup>, Augustine recommends mutual forgiveness as the way to ensure that “Though your sins are daily, at least let them not be deadly”<sup>400</sup>. The real misery of sin lies not in having it, but dying in it<sup>401</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

31 Augustine’s account of the Fall of man is at once both simple and profound: simple, because “we, by turning away to sin, lose enlightenment; and by turning to God receive enlightenment”<sup>402</sup>; profound, because his intensely practical doctrine of the

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<sup>393</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 2.8

<sup>394</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 10.5; cf. *en.Ps.* 130.2, *trin.* 11.3.10, *Is.* 5.18, *Prov.* 5.22, *Mt.* 22.13

<sup>395</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 34.8

<sup>396</sup> see Chapter 1.37

<sup>397</sup> *ench.* 80

<sup>398</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 12.14

<sup>399</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 1.6

<sup>400</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 26.11

<sup>401</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 38.6

<sup>402</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 21.4

image<sup>403</sup> both incorporates and elucidates all the discoveries of philosophy he held most dear.

32 The consistency of Augustine's various commentaries on creation and fall in Genesis is maintained through a simple and essentially orthodox interpretation of Scripture. Persuaded by Satan to reject God's dominion in favour of pursuing their own, Adam and Eve fell from their original blessedness<sup>404</sup>. The ensuing "chain of sin... [means] all who were born of [Adam] from him derived the concupiscence of the flesh... the heritage of sin and death"<sup>405</sup>. "[T]he chains we have made for ourselves," are formed from "the chief kinds of wickedness. They spring from the lust for domination or from the lust of the eyes or from sensuality- either one or two of these, or all three at once"<sup>406</sup>. Bound in the chains of original and personal sin, fallen man's only freedom is to serve his master willingly- that is, to sin with pleasure<sup>407</sup>. "This is the truly lamentable but unblameable condition of the present days in which we pass in this mortal state"<sup>408</sup>.

33 Augustine would see living falsely as being the product of intellectual pride, and disobedience as the product of moral pride. When speaking simply of 'pride' Augustine normally has this latter moral pride in mind- the exaltation of self, the desire to be god, the lust for domination or superiority. In contrast to the obedience, born of humble worship of God, which guards all other virtues<sup>409</sup>, the disobedience, born of proud worship of self is prey to ever-greater vices. Thus emerge the battle lines of Augustine's moral theory: pride and disobedience leading to death versus humility and obedience leading to Life<sup>410</sup>. As real life for Augustine is the life of virtue, the direct relationship between will and virtue is confirmed.

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<sup>403</sup> Hill says Augustine's long discussion in *De trinitate* 7.1 on the logical status of "wisdom" and words like it leads him to link the ideas of image and imitation (as many Latin church writers have done on etymological grounds) and thereby show "that the doctrine of the image is a practical one" (Hill trans. 2 p.233 note 23).

<sup>404</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 4.3

<sup>405</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 3.13, 12

<sup>406</sup> *conf.* 3.8.16, 1Jn. 2:16; see Chapter 5.3

<sup>407</sup> *ench.* 30

<sup>408</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 124.5

<sup>409</sup> *civ.* 14.12, 13

<sup>410</sup> see Chapter 3.39, *trin.* 4.3.13

34 The legacy of concupiscence- disobedience, ignorance and infirmity- reflects man's separation from God's righteousness, wisdom and holiness and accounts for man's imperfect virtue, knowledge and love. Hitherto in this work, man's will has been associated with moral philosophy which relates to action and his virtue has been associated with natural philosophy which is devoted to speculation. So then, while morality is concerned with the action of the will, natural philosophy refers to what may be termed the speculation of virtue; or more colloquially, the choice of lifestyle. The *speculation* which Plato says "has a special claim to insight into the truth"<sup>411</sup>, is in fact the virtue man speculates on- that is, the art of living a man adopts, the style of life he chooses<sup>412</sup>. When a man's choice of virtue or lifestyle is correct he is led to truth. Yet the virtue or lifestyle a man pursues will be determined by the action of his will, that is, his morality. When the will rightly orders man's loves, correct virtue follows and so man comes to truth. This is *how* moral purification leads to intellectual purification.

35 Will and virtue are in fact mutual parasites, feeding on and off each other- the will prompts the virtue that leads to truth and that truth, by confirming the goodness of man's will and virtue, encourages man to persevere in his will and virtue. In Augustine's moral theory, when will and virtue are characterised by humility and obedience respectively, man is led on to the holiness and righteousness of God, that is, to Life; but when will and virtue are characterised by pride and disobedience respectively, man descends into the nothingness of sin and death. The role played by man's knowledge correlates to that ascribed by Plato to rational philosophy in his threefold division; that is, to distinguish true will and virtue from falsehood. In doing this successfully, man becomes wise. This depth of thought lies beneath Augustine's explanation of himself to his readers in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 18: "I would move a longing desire in your heart. Good character leads to right understanding: one kind of life leads to another kind of life"<sup>413</sup>. The will is to order man's love to God so that he may live virtuously and thereby come to the Life and Truth of God. While the higher part of man's reason is to contemplate the mysteries of the Wisdom God is, the lower part of man's reason is to apply his now enlightened knowledge to concrete

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<sup>411</sup> *civ.* 8.4

<sup>412</sup> This is why for the ancients philosophy blurred into religion as a way of life and why at least one modern philosopher demands there be no "restricting individuality, or impeding the trial of new and original experiments in living"(Mill, J.S. *On Liberty* p.81 in *On Liberty and Other Writings* Collini, S. ed. Cambridge University Press, 1993)



ethical situations by deciding which delights and desires of the will are lawful and which virtues are to be cultivated.

36 Sin's depravity strikes hardest at man's dignity- it deforms the image of God in which man was made. Rather than "worship the uncreated God"<sup>414</sup>, man is tempted to worship the gods created by the deformed image in his mind. In deserting the Creator of the world man is made subject to the lusts of the world. This disordering of man's memory, understanding and will is most marked in the will because it was in the will that man first turned from God. Fallen man's problem is not only finding a way back to the Life and Truth of God which his deformed image remembers and understands, but having the wholehearted will to follow that way to the Light he once deserted. To become wholehearted in this pursuit, the will, Augustine insisted, requires the help or grace of God.

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<sup>413</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 18.7

<sup>414</sup> see Chapter 2.1, *trin.* 14.5.15

# CHAPTER 3: THE MAN CHRIST JESUS

## INTRODUCTION

1 The “confusion” and “weakness” which submerged the adolescent Augustine “in a whirlpool of vice”<sup>415</sup> threaten to drown every victim of concupiscence in disobedience. The sins precipitated by man’s ignorance and infirmity preclude his participation in the only truth and life which can bring man happiness. Powerless to reform his deformed memory, understanding and will of God by himself, fallen man, reasons Augustine, must look to God for help. Such help came in the form of the Word made flesh who is full of the truth and grace<sup>416</sup> which instruct and strengthen man’s understanding and will respectively. In fulfilling these roles of Teacher and Physician, the man Christ Jesus reveals himself as the authentic mediator between God and men<sup>417</sup>. He is the one, contends Augustine, who provides the way to the truth and life of eternal happiness<sup>418</sup>.

## CHRIST THE TEACHER

2 The image of Christ as a Teacher is one Augustine’s congregation in Hippo would have been only too familiar with because, as Brown observes, “On the sarcophagi of the age, [Christ] is always presented as a Teacher, teaching his wisdom to a coterie of budding philosophers. For a cultivated man, the essence of Christianity consisted in this”<sup>419</sup>. The image is employed profitably throughout *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* wherein Augustine is ever-anxious for his listeners to learn from “both [Christ’s] works and words... His works, because they are facts; His words, because they are signs”<sup>420</sup>. Christ fulfilled his words on how life is to be lived<sup>421</sup>, loved<sup>422</sup> and judged<sup>423</sup> through works of patience and power<sup>424</sup>, prayer<sup>425</sup> and

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<sup>415</sup> *conf.* 2.2.2

<sup>416</sup> Jn. 1:14

<sup>417</sup> 1Tim. 2:5

<sup>418</sup> Jn. 14:6

<sup>419</sup> Brown p.41

<sup>420</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 44.1

<sup>421</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 55.7

<sup>422</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 51.10

<sup>423</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 30.7-8

<sup>424</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 37.10, 43.1, 18, 113.4, 115.1

<sup>425</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 50.3, 104.2

prudence<sup>426</sup>, tolerance and sacrifice<sup>427</sup>. In Christ, teacher and teaching are one and the same thing. Augustine regards the man Christ Jesus as Truth incarnate<sup>428</sup> and asserts quite unequivocally that unless the Word had taken flesh in Christ sinful men abiding in the flesh would never have been able to hear the Word of God<sup>429</sup>.

3 Before his Fall, man, argues Augustine, was in constant interior converse with God. This openness to the Word was forfeited through sin. Since man is no longer able to receive the light of God's Truth directly, God must communicate with man through the veil of sensible media<sup>430</sup>. Many philosophers would agree with Christians like Irenaeus that God calls man "by temporal things to eternal things, by the carnal to the spiritual, by the earthly to the heavenly"<sup>431</sup> but, remarks Augustine at the outset of *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, because such philosophers have praised themselves, rather than thanking God, for coming to "know God" through the visible things of creation, they have become proud. So though such philosophers have the vision to see as John did, "that by the Word of God all things were made," they do not have the humility to accept this same Word was made man in Christ Jesus<sup>432</sup>. Man is brought to Truth by humble faith not philosophical pride.

4 Augustine reassures his congregation in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* that the light of Truth who enlightens all men has come into the world in a cloud of flesh "not to be obscured, but to be moderated"<sup>433</sup>. "Our knowledge therefore is Christ, and our wisdom is the same Christ. It is he who plants faith in us about temporal things, he who presents us with the truth about eternal things. Through him we go straight toward him, through knowledge toward wisdom, without ever turning aside from one and the same Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"<sup>434</sup>. Strictly speaking, continues Augustine in *De trinitate*, the divine Christ is an inner teacher of heavenly wisdom and the human Christ is an outer teacher of earthly

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<sup>426</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 27.8, 116.5

<sup>427</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 28.6, 1

<sup>428</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 41.1

<sup>429</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 26.8

<sup>430</sup> Harrison p.59-60, *Io.ev.tr.* 23.9

<sup>431</sup> Irenaeus *Adversus Haereses* 4.14.3

<sup>432</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 2.2-4

<sup>433</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 34.4

<sup>434</sup> *trin.* 13.6.24, Col. 2:3, 1Cor. 12:8; cf Madec, G. *Christus, Scientia et Sapientia nostra* Recherches Augustiniennes (1975) pp.77-85

knowledge, but more generally, Christ can teach truths about both eternal and temporal realities in either *forma dei* or *forma servi*. In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* therefore, Augustine illustrates how the God who forgives sin and iniquity “but who will by no means clear the guilty”<sup>435</sup> teaches man how to do the same through the man Christ Jesus. When a woman caught committing adultery is presented before him for judgement “Mercy” refuses to condemn the woman, but “the voice of Justice” warns, firstly, her would-be executioners to reflect on their own sins and, secondly, the woman herself to sin no more<sup>436</sup>. By demonstrating how “compassion [can be] shown without detriment to justice,” the man Christ Jesus resolves the arguments of philosophers over such matters<sup>437</sup> and gives substance to Augustine’s moral and ethical thought.

5 Yet the knowledge and wisdom found in Christ are not his own, for he himself acknowledges he came and taught not in his own name and authority but in those of his Father<sup>438</sup>. Furthermore, Christ says no one can bear the knowledge and wisdom he taught without the gift of the Holy Spirit<sup>439</sup>. The divinity Christ shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit is what John the evangelist contemplates in particular. The fourth gospel therefore gives Augustine an especial opportunity for opening up the trinitarian nature of his moral theory.

6 In calling God his Father, Christ, observes Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, was not seeking to make himself something he was not but confirming that “the Father begot Him equal. Were He to make Himself equal, He would [like Satan] fall by robbery”<sup>440</sup>. That God is ‘Father’ is “a name that could not be known without the manifestation of the Son Himself”<sup>441</sup>. Equally though, if Christ had remained in human form with his disciples they would not have longed to know and love the divine nature which Christ shares with the Father. So, says Augustine, as necessary as it was “for the creation of faith” that the Lord walk upon earth, for the disciples to develop a longing and therefore a capacity for Christ’s divinity, it was needful for him to

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<sup>435</sup> Ex. 34:6-8

<sup>436</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 33.4-6

<sup>437</sup> *civ.* 9.5

<sup>438</sup> Jn. 5:43, 30

<sup>439</sup> Jn. 16:12-13

<sup>440</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 17.16

<sup>441</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 106.4

withdraw from them physically, for only then could the Holy Spirit be sent<sup>442</sup>. He it is who, by pouring into men's hearts the love of God, guides man into the truth of how "Christ is not only man like ourselves, but God also... the Son is equal to the Father, and the Holy Spirit to the Father and Son... [and] the Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit are a Trinity"<sup>443</sup>. Augustine's moral theory and applied ethics is set firmly in this Trinitarian framework where belief seeks understanding and faith in the Word made flesh working through the love of God imparted by the Holy Spirit leads man on to "the Father of Truth"<sup>444</sup>.

7 Without faith, claims Augustine, otherwise laudable attempts to understand the truths behind words and the realities beyond signs (which Augustine always encouraged<sup>445</sup>) are rendered vain. For while God can be known with certainty from his works by the natural light of human reason<sup>446</sup>, God's revelation of himself in Scripture, Christ and the Church cannot be<sup>447</sup>. The only adequate response to divine revelation is *faith*, by which man submits his intellect and will to God. This, for Augustine, is humility. Since the "philosophers of this world" are so lacking in humility, argues Augustine repeatedly, man is best served, not by the "proud wisdom" which, having glimpsed its fatherland, refuses to follow the way that leads there, but by the humble faith which, while not always seeing the homeland of Truth, is willing to cling to the cross of Christ that does lead there<sup>448</sup>. Rist is right therefore to observe that Augustine regards understanding as a product of both knowledge and belief<sup>449</sup> - knowledge of Scripture, Christ Jesus and the Church as realities located in time and space; and belief in each as authentic revelations of the Word of God<sup>450</sup>.

8 To enter "the mystery of the Word made flesh" Augustine had to accept in *faith* the man Christ Jesus "as the personal embodiment of the Truth"<sup>451</sup>. This demand helped convince Augustine that faith does lead to truth<sup>452</sup> and belief to understanding<sup>453</sup>.

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<sup>442</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 40.9, 94.4

<sup>443</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 96.3, Rom. 5:5

<sup>444</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 42.13, Gal. 5:6

<sup>445</sup> *mag.* 9.25, *Acad.* 2.2.26

<sup>446</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 106.4

<sup>447</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 58.3

<sup>448</sup> see *Io.ev.tr.* 2.2-4, *conf.* 7.21.27, *civ.* 10.29

<sup>449</sup> Rist p.62

<sup>450</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 21.1, 15.33

<sup>451</sup> *conf.* 7.19.25

<sup>452</sup> Plato *Timaeus* 29c in *trin.* 4.4.24, Hill trans. 2 p.183 note 75

Isaiah 7:9 “is perhaps Augustine’s favourite quotation, or in fact misquotation, from Scripture. He misquotes not from carelessness, but because his text is a mistranslation”<sup>454</sup>. Nevertheless the principle Augustine drew from his reading of Isa. 7:9 is an important one. When developing skills of any kind- sporting, musical, academic- pupils are often asked to trust their teacher’s instructions. By accepting and observing the teacher’s instructions pupils are gradually enabled to perform the desired skill. Such experience not only helps pupils appreciate a particular skill more fully but, by confirming the goodness of the teacher’s advice, it increases the pupils’ trust in their teacher for the future. Skill acquisition of this kind demands, firstly, a teacher who teaches correctly and, secondly, pupils who are willing to listen to and obey that teacher. Augustine regards Christ Jesus as the supreme teacher on happiness because all Christ’s human words and works witness to the life, truth and will required for abiding happiness.

9 It must of course be stressed that Augustine’s contention in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* that “we believe in order that we may know, we do not know in order to believe”<sup>455</sup> in no way denigrates or dismisses the importance of reason, “For no one believes anything unless he first thinks it should be believed”<sup>456</sup>. Any suggestion that faith and reason are contradictory or irreconcilable would be anathema to Augustine who, as has been seen, always maintained that the image of God in which man was created is impressed on the rational part of man’s soul, that is, on his mind<sup>457</sup>. Faith without reason leaves man prey to superstition<sup>458</sup>; reason without faith leaves him philosophising without a mediator<sup>459</sup>. For Augustine, man’s needs for both true faith and right reason are met in and by Christ the Teacher.

10 Following John, Augustine speaks of truth’s struggle with error or deceit in terms of the battle between light and darkness in which the two prime combatants are Christ and Satan respectively. “[B]y faith in Christ,” declares Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, “thousands of believers are delivered from the dominion of the

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<sup>453</sup> Isa. 7:9

<sup>454</sup> Hill trans. 2 p.236 note 50; cf. Hill trans. 2 p.22, Nicene & Post Nicene Fathers Vol. VII p.325 note 4

<sup>455</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 40.9

<sup>456</sup> *praed.sanct.* 2.5 in Portalié p.116

<sup>457</sup> see Chapter 2.6

<sup>458</sup> *conf.* 7.6.9

<sup>459</sup> *trin.* 13.6.24

devil, are united to the body of Christ, and under this great head are made by his one Spirit to spring up into new life as his faithful members”<sup>460</sup>. Once Satan is cast “out of the hearts of the believing” God takes possession of them and though the devil may assault the believer from without “that person consents not thereto, to whom God speaks within”<sup>461</sup>. As faithful members of the body of Christ, believers are enabled to make the transition from the evil, sinful and unrighteous life emanating from their own corrupt will to participation in the life the Son has in himself of the Father<sup>462</sup>. Abiding faith in Christ, argues Augustine, purifies man morally and intellectually by bringing him to the Truth which sets man free from the infirmity and ignorance which precipitate sin. Yet to abide in Christ’s word, man requires the gift of the Holy Spirit.

11 Without the love and charity of the Holy Spirit, insists Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, neither knowledge of nor faith in Christ are of any profit<sup>463</sup>. The Rich Young Man who “went to [Christ] as a teacher, and despised his teaching, went away sorrowful, tied and bound by his lusts”<sup>464</sup>. Similarly, the devils who confessed Christ as the Son of God in an attempt to drive him away remain in fear of annihilation<sup>465</sup>. Augustine maintains that the person who knows Christ’s commandments orally ought to keep them morally because “by works is love made manifest”<sup>466</sup>. By casting out man’s fears of practising faith publicly, the perfect love of charity fortifies believers to preach Christ as true God and true man<sup>467</sup>. As the disciples discovered at Pentecost, the love and charity required to obey Christ and witness to him fearlessly is poured into a man’s heart by the Holy Spirit<sup>468</sup>. This is why for Augustine faith leads to Truth when, and only when, faith works through loving obedience. The Holy Spirit helps man to press on from knowledge to wisdom, from belief to understanding, in Christ Jesus by enabling man to obey Christ the outer teacher through perfect love.

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<sup>460</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 52.6

<sup>461</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 4.1-2

<sup>462</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 22.9

<sup>463</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 27.8, 1Cor. 8.1; *Io.ev.tr.* 6.21, Jas. 2:19

<sup>464</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 34.8

<sup>465</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 10.1

<sup>466</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 75.5;

<sup>467</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 100.1, 1Jn. 4:18

<sup>468</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 92.1f

12 Polman cites *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* 3.13 as encapsulating Augustine's entire epistemology, and the analogy contained therein of preachers planting and watering from without, while God alone gives the growth within<sup>469</sup>, is indeed a much-favoured one of Augustine's, emphasising as it does his conviction that while "men do learn from men, what they understand is given within, flashes within, is revealed within" by God alone<sup>470</sup>. As an inner teacher, God the Son, explains Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*,

"speaks inwardly to the souls of the intelligent: He needs no sound to instruct, but floods the mind with the light of understanding... But that men may believe what they had not yet the capacity to understand, words that were audible passed from His human lips"<sup>471</sup>.

For that cannot be known which is altogether unknown. But when what is known, in however small a measure, is also loved, by the self-same love one is led on to a better and fuller knowledge"<sup>472</sup>.

Augustine therefore regards the missions of the Son and the Spirit to be like their very Persons- distinct yet inseparable. The Son clothed himself with flesh so man may learn from man about the mysteries of God. The Spirit pours the love of God into man's heart so man may love what Christ the outer teacher has made known. By co-operating with these gifts through active charity, man comes to understand the Word behind Christ's words. Through loving obedience, claims Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, man is brought to the Truth which Christ is, has that Truth reproduced in himself and so has the image of God in which he, man, was made renewed<sup>473</sup>.

13 For Augustine then, man is to respond to the missions of the Son and Spirit in humility and obedience. Through humility man submits his intellect and will to Christ the inner teacher; and through obedience he uses the gifts of the Spirit to serve Christ the outer teacher. Augustine would argue that humility comes first in the order of contemplation and obedience comes first in the order of action, because while humility prepares man to love God obedience manifests man's love of God through love of

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<sup>469</sup> Polman p.32, 1Cor. 3:6-7;

<sup>470</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 26.7

<sup>471</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 54.8

<sup>472</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 96.3-4

<sup>473</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 40.9



neighbour<sup>474</sup>. Christ fulfilled his own double commandment of love on Calvary: greater love for God has no man than he be humble and obedient unto death; greater love for neighbour has no man than he lay down his life for his friends<sup>475</sup>. This is why Augustine looks upon the Eucharist, the memorial of Christ's death, as a sacrament of love<sup>476</sup> and declares any person wishing to partake of it must imitate Christ- they must be prepared, firstly, to lay down their life for their brethren and, secondly, to "approach in humility" and "a spirit of reverential obedience"<sup>477</sup>. By observing such love, the faithful grow in their understanding of the crucified Christ as the power and wisdom of God<sup>478</sup>.

14 Hence the very thing that Brown identifies as being absent from the art work of fourth century African Christianity, "a suffering Saviour"<sup>479</sup>, becomes central to Augustine's moral and ethical thought. Man should learn to glory in nothing save Christ's cross because, proclaims Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, Pilate's inscription in Hebrew, Greek and Latin confirms that on the candelabrum of the cross Christ shines as the light of Truth to convict those who seek glory in the Law (without the Spirit), human wisdom and temporal power respectively<sup>480</sup>. Man's happiness lies not in the loves of the world but in the love of God- the full breadth, length, height and depth of which, continues Augustine, is contained in the cross of Christ<sup>481</sup>. Nevertheless it is only those who imitate the humility and obedience of Christ who come to perceive the power of humility and the wisdom of obedience<sup>482</sup>.

15 As the Father gave the Son everything in begetting him from all eternity<sup>483</sup>, argues Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, "The only Son is the Word and Wisdom of the Father, and therein are all the commandments of the Father"<sup>484</sup>. Since these commandments are held in the Father's incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, as in a glass

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<sup>474</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 17.8

<sup>475</sup> Phil. 2:6-8, Jn. 15:13

<sup>476</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 26.13

<sup>477</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 84.1-2, 1Jn. 3:16

<sup>478</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 98.2, 1Cor. 1:23-24

<sup>479</sup> Brown p.42

<sup>480</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 117.3-5, 115.5

<sup>481</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 118.5, Eph. 3:18

<sup>482</sup> 1Cor. 1:23-24

<sup>483</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 106.4, 6-7

<sup>484</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 54.7

dimly, many see but do not perceive and many hear but do not understand<sup>485</sup>. According to Augustine, what purifies men's hearts and minds to see the power and wisdom of God in the crucified Christ is faith working through love. In practice, this means humility and obedience. In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* therefore, Augustine makes it clear that those who acclaim Christ as their "Good Master" must be willing to learn of him who is meek and lowly in heart<sup>486</sup>. By seeking Christ's glory through the contemplative love of God and active love of neighbour<sup>487</sup>, man comes to discover all the riches of wisdom and knowledge that are hid in Christ.

16 Both Madec<sup>488</sup> and Polman<sup>489</sup> observe that Christ marks the decisive difference between Neoplatonism's theory of understanding and Augustine's theory of illumination because, for Augustine, the light who enlightens all men came into the world when the Word became flesh in Christ<sup>490</sup>. "[F]or your teaching," declares Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, "He who made man was made man, but He remained still the unchangeable God, and transplanted manhood into a better condition"<sup>491</sup>. "What would He teach? What declare? Hear. That 'God is light, and there is no darkness in Him at all... and we *must* have fellowship with Him [if we are to enjoy eternal life]'. So then from us also must the darkness [of sin] be driven away, that there may be light created in us, for darkness cannot have fellowship with light"<sup>492</sup>. To participate in the light of God once more then, man requires a mediator capable of removing the sin which separates men from God<sup>493</sup>.

## CHRIST THE PHYSICIAN

17 Finding Platonism offered him no stability in the Truth, Augustine, claims Brown, came to realise any ascent to eternal beatitude "would no longer depend on himself alone, but on an 'invisible doctor', that is, on God"<sup>494</sup>. Polman adds that for Augustine initially Christ was above all a Physician whose humility cures man's

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<sup>485</sup> see 1Cor. 13:12, Mt. 13:14-15

<sup>486</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 34.8, Mt. 11:29

<sup>487</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 17.8

<sup>488</sup> Madec p.164

<sup>489</sup> Polman p.32

<sup>490</sup> Jn. 1:9

<sup>491</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 52.3

<sup>492</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 1.4, 5, 1Jn. 1:5-6

<sup>493</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 41.5

<sup>494</sup> *sol.* 1.14.25 in Brown p.105

pride<sup>495</sup>. Pride itself being “the source of all diseases, because pride is the source of all sins”<sup>496</sup>. The image of Christ as a Physician was one Augustine’s congregation could readily appropriate. In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, he uses it to reassure them that in Christ God has provided a panacea for all men’s ills<sup>497</sup>.

18 The commandments given by Christ the Teacher are often interpreted by Augustine as the remedies recommended by Christ the Physician. Given that the Teacher and Physician in question are one and the same, namely, Christ, some degree of overlap is only to be expected. So as well as being a key instruction from “the teacher of humility”<sup>498</sup>, Christ’s exhortation to “Learn from me, for I am meek and lowly of heart” is interpreted by Augustine as being “all the medicine we need”<sup>499</sup>. Similarly, the man who rejects the remedies of Christ the Physician will remain sick as assuredly as he who rejected Christ the Teacher’s commandments “went away sorrowful, tied and bound with his lusts”<sup>500</sup>. To differentiate between these two roles played by Christ, it is helpful to recall the conception of faith as the submission of the intellect and will to God’s revelation of himself<sup>501</sup>, for while Christ the Teacher addresses his Truth to man’s intellect, Christ the Physician directs his grace to man’s will. While such a differentiation does help clarify discussion of Christ’s different roles, it must be remembered that this is more a matter of emphasis than of strict distinction. Furthermore, as Augustine always recognised, Christ will always be greater than any descriptions made of him because Christ is God incarnate and God is greater than anything that could be ever said or thought about him<sup>502</sup>.

19 When resuming his commentary on the Gospel of John in 414, Augustine puts forward Christ as “the Physician both of souls and bodies” and points out that the spiritual healing Christ works is more important than the physical cures he wrought,

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<sup>495</sup> Polman says Augustine latter denied its importance but never retracted it. As his understanding of man’s sinfulness and God’s righteous anger developed, Augustine came to stress Christ as the Mediator who shed his blood for us and bends our wills to his righteousness (p.144-5)

<sup>496</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 25.16

<sup>497</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 110.3, *ep.Io.tr.* 8.13

<sup>498</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 35.18

<sup>499</sup> *serm.* 142.7 in Polman p.144

<sup>500</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 34.8, 36.2

<sup>501</sup> see Chapter 3.7

<sup>502</sup> *trin.* 5.1-2

because the bodies he cured died later anyway, whereas “the soul that believed passed to eternal life”<sup>503</sup>. The following day<sup>504</sup> Augustine gives an account of how Christ goes about his work as a Physician. Augustine opens *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 18 by describing how Christ’s claim to be equal to God<sup>505</sup> was designed to agitate and trouble his hearers into seeking the Physician. “Now the Jews were moved and indignant: justly, indeed, because a man dared to make himself equal with God; but unjustly in this, because in the man they understood not God”<sup>506</sup>. Augustine acknowledges such understanding comes through faith that “the Father is both equal and greater [than Christ]; equal to the Word, greater than the flesh... By this sound catholic rule” Augustine proceeds to dismiss Arian claims- based on Christ’s saying that “The Son cannot do anything of himself, but only what he sees the Father”<sup>507</sup>- that the Son is less than and of a different substance to the Father<sup>508</sup>. Against Arian protestations that the Word who was God is a lesser God, Augustine affirms not two Gods, but two persons undivided in love, “and if undivided love, then perfect unity,” one God<sup>509</sup>.

20 In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 18, Augustine goes on to say that Christ’s troubling remarks are intended to convince man to let go of false beliefs, just as a harmful toy is wrestled from a child. “If man lives after the flesh, he is on a level with the beasts; if he lives after the Spirit, he joins in the fellowship of angels”<sup>510</sup>. In terms of preaching, Augustine’s soaring account of ‘desire’ may have acted as pleasant relief from his intense discussion of the Arian heresy<sup>511</sup>. In terms of morality and ethics, the account makes it clear that moral purification leads to intellectual purification and the fundamental orientation of man’s desire- to God or the world- shapes his destiny.

21 To conclude this same homily in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, Augustine considers how Christ the Physician operates. In the case of physical sight, a person whose recovering eyes have been beaten back by the glare of light begs the physician to continue treatment because the desire to see soundly is greater than the fear of the pain

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<sup>503</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 17.1

<sup>504</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 18.1

<sup>505</sup> Jn. 5:18

<sup>506</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 18.2

<sup>507</sup> Jn. 5:19

<sup>508</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 18.2-3

<sup>509</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 18.4

<sup>510</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 18.7

<sup>511</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 18.3-6, 8-9

the treatment may include. “[I]t may be that something like this has taken place in your hearts, if somehow you have raised your heart to see the Word, and beaten back by its light, you have fallen back to your accustomed ways; pray the Physician to apply sharp salves, the precepts of righteousness... Do not lie, do not swear falsely, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not defraud. But you are used to these, and it is with some pain you are drawn away from your old habits: this is what bites, but yet heals... [I]f you give up the healing... you will love the darkness... and be cast even into outer darkness”<sup>512</sup>. To approach the light of God’s Truth, man must therefore develop a love for and perseverance in God’s laws as laid down in Scripture and reiterated by Christ. This process is incorporated in Augustine’s conception of servile and chaste fear.

22 In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* and *Enarrationes in Psalmos*<sup>513</sup>, Augustine observes that just as “An adulterous woman fears the coming of her husband” lest her infidelity be discovered and she be punished, so the wicked dread Christ’s second coming. Conversely, just as a “chaste [woman] fears her husband’s departure” lest she fall into temptation and lose her righteousness, so the faithful long for Christ’s return. By making a man avoid sin and act righteously, continues Augustine, the fear of condemnation can make him develop a habit for righteousness and thereby a liking for it. When this liking for righteousness becomes a love for it, such love casts out man’s servile fear. “Fear is the healing operation; charity, the sound condition... When once you have begun to desire the good, there shall be in you the chaste fear... [S]uch a fear as that does not disturb, but reassure.” This pure fear endures forever and so enables man not only to make the seven stage ascent to wisdom but to embrace and possess it eternally. So what is begun in humility- accepting the salves of Christ the Physician as true- is completed through charity- the chaste fear which casts out servile fear is supplied by the Holy Spirit who pours into man’s heart the love of God<sup>514</sup>. As with his ministry of teaching<sup>515</sup>, Christ’s ministry of healing is completed through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

23 In *De trinitate*, Augustine says that any medicine must have something in common with the sick person and such harmony is also a principle of salvation. As sin

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<sup>512</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 18.11

<sup>513</sup> see *Io.ev.tr.* 43.7, *ep.Io.tr.* 9.6-8, *en.Ps.* 128.7-8, 119.2

<sup>514</sup> *Rom.* 5:5

effects man in the temporal world, the remedy for the sickness of sin must be in the temporal world<sup>516</sup>. In the opening tractates of *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* therefore, Augustine makes it clear that the sin and death caused by man's infirm will are remedied through the incarnation and crucifixion of the Son of God: "The soul had become carnal by consenting to the affections of the flesh: thus had the eye of the heart been wounded. 'The Word was made flesh:' that Physician made for you an eye-salve. He thus came by flesh to extinguish the vices of the flesh, and by death to slay death"<sup>517</sup>. As the man Christ Jesus did not exist before the Word became flesh he had no merits and so his incarnation provides the clearest example of the power of God's free grace<sup>518</sup>. The bag of grace the man Christ Jesus became, declares Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, was rent asunder on Calvary and man's purchase ran out<sup>519</sup>: Grace streamed from Christ as he slept on the cross when his side was "opened" and therefrom "flowed the sacraments of the Church, without which there is no entrance to the life which is the true life"<sup>520</sup>. For Augustine then, the grace with which Christ the Physician cures sin is made available to men in this temporal world through the Church's sacraments.

24 Conscious of the ongoing Donatist threat during the early sermons of *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, Augustine takes care to point out that while the Church may administer the sacraments, their efficacy is guaranteed by Christ himself- the adopted receive the ministry, the only Son retains the power<sup>521</sup>. Therefore, insists Augustine, only those who keep in unity with Christ minister validly. This is done by maintaining unity with his body, the Church- for just as Eve who was formed from the side of the sleeping Adam became one flesh with him, so the Church which was formed from the side of Christ is one flesh with him<sup>522</sup>. In dividing himself from the Church then, a man automatically separates himself from Christ and thereby from the power of

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<sup>515</sup> see Chapter 3.6

<sup>516</sup> *trin.* 4.2.4, 4.4.24

<sup>517</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 2.16

<sup>518</sup> *ench.* 35-36

<sup>519</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 28.2, cf. Bernard of Clairvaux *Sermon 1, Epiphany*, 1-2: "God the Father has sent down to earth as it were a bag filled with his mercy; a bag to be rent open in the passion so that our ransom which it concealed may be poured out"

<sup>520</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 120.2

<sup>521</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 5.6, 7.4; see Chapter 4.7f for a full discussion of Donatism

<sup>522</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 9.10

Christ's grace. Partaking of Christ's sacraments in such cases, Augustine holds, brings not a remedy unto salvation but a poison unto damnation<sup>523</sup>.

25 The inviolable link between the man Christ Jesus and his sacraments is underscored by Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* when he describes Christ's opened side as a "health-giving wound" because the blood which issued forth remits sins and the water which ran out supplies "the laver of baptism"<sup>524</sup>. By the wounds of the cross, "He is the complete Physician for our wounds"<sup>525</sup>, for just as Adam was made weak from the flesh and Eve was made strong from bone, so it is with "Christ and the Church; His weakness is our strength"<sup>526</sup>. So man may partake of Christ's weakness and have his will strengthened, Christ has arranged that the sacrifice of the cross be perpetuated through the sacrament of the Eucharist. To do this fruitfully, man must be prepared to make a similar sacrifice of humility and obedience<sup>527</sup>. To reject this prescription, warns Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, risks destroying oneself<sup>528</sup>.

26 Just as God answers prayers unto salvation not unto wants, so, declares Augustine in *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, the divine Physician, Christ Jesus, prescribes what is necessary not what is asked for<sup>529</sup>. His motive throughout though is love. By visiting Zaccheus and saving him from the disease of avarice, Christ demonstrates how he loves the wicked in order that they may become righteous and visits the sick to make them whole<sup>530</sup>. Like the carpenter who looks upon a log not for what it is but for what it may become, Christ the Physician loves fallen man not for his present sin but for his future righteousness<sup>531</sup>. While Christ can look steadily at the sinner and love him<sup>532</sup>, the fallen creature will not be re-formed in the beauty of righteousness unless he accepts what Christ prescribes.

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<sup>523</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 6.15, 26.11

<sup>524</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 120.2

<sup>525</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 3.3

<sup>526</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 15.8

<sup>527</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 84.1-2

<sup>528</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 12.12

<sup>529</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 6.5-8

<sup>530</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 6.6, 9.10, 7.7

<sup>531</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 8.10

<sup>532</sup> *Mk.* 10:17-22

27 In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, Augustine presents Peter as being in many ways the model patient of Christ. In Peter's threefold denial of Christ "the prediction of the Physician is fulfilled and the presumption of the sick man is brought to light... But in looking on [Peter], we ought to take home the lesson to ourselves, that no man should place his confidence in human strength"<sup>533</sup>. Equally, man should take stock of Peter's subsequent actions: he acknowledged his sin fully through tears of repentance<sup>534</sup> and by a corresponding threefold confession of love for Christ Peter was not only reconciled with his master but commissioned to feed Christ's flock. These events speak profoundly to Augustine. Regarding Christ, the truth of the Physician's diagnosis and the grace of his mercy are revealed. Regarding Peter, what was begun in humility is completed through love. Consequently, for Augustine himself, the order of bishop is to be an "office of love"<sup>535</sup>. These individual experiences prompt and reflect some more general principles for Augustine. Firstly, the sickness caused to the proud by the guilt which the law brought is remedied by humble confession to Christ the Physician<sup>536</sup>. Secondly, "the confession of bad works is the beginning of good works"<sup>537</sup>. Finally, internally and externally the Church is to operate according to the law of love<sup>538</sup>.

28 Like Augustine before baptism, those starved of Christ's grace prefer their regular but harmful habits to Christ's bitter but healing truths<sup>539</sup>. By accepting the weakness of Christ and the gift of his Spirit, man's vitiated will is rehabilitated in the humility and charity by which faith works through love; God's righteousness now begins to delight man. As all these riches of healing and strengthening are hidden in Christ Jesus alone, Augustine is adamant that the Old Testament must give way to the New, the Law to grace and the letter to the Spirit.

## CHRIST THE MEDIATOR

29 Remy traces the development of the doctrine of the mediator in Augustine's thought and says that it had matured as early as 394<sup>540</sup>. Like Remy<sup>541</sup>, Verwilghen

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<sup>533</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 113.6, 66.2

<sup>534</sup> "The two conversions in the Church are signified by water and tears: the water of Baptism and the tears of repentance"- Ambrose *ep.* 41.12 in op. cit. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* Paragraph 1429

<sup>535</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 124.5, *serm.* 340.1

<sup>536</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 3.2

<sup>537</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 12.13

<sup>538</sup> see Chapters 4 and 5 respectively

<sup>539</sup> *conf.* 6.12.22

<sup>540</sup> see Remy p.67f



interprets Augustine's doctrine of the mediator in terms of effect and example: "The Son in *forma servi* offered a double remedy to men: the sacrament by means of which he confers divine grace on them and the example by means of which he demands they participate in the work of redemption"<sup>542</sup>. The present work seeks to expand on such an interpretation by demonstrating in images characteristic of Augustine's preaching, how, in fulfilling the requirements and role of Mediator, Christ emerges as man's Physician and Teacher. To do this, the ancient philosophical concept of mediation must be considered first.

30 As has been noted, Augustine concludes various discussions of the happy life with an inquiry into true and false mediators<sup>543</sup>. His most sustained examination of the subject takes place in Books 8, 9 and 10 of *De civitate dei*. Having spent the first half of Book 8 praising the Platonists for their recognition of God as the light of life, truth and happiness<sup>544</sup>, Augustine attacks them for rendering "worship to a plurality of Gods"<sup>545</sup>. Augustine says Plato himself did not err as seriously as many of his followers did<sup>546</sup> and identifies the work of Apuleius of Madaura as being symptomatic of the Platonists' grievous faults. In *The God of Socrates*, Apuleius states that there are three types of being with a rational soul- "the gods have their abode in heaven; mankind lives on earth; demons dwell in the air"<sup>547</sup> and defines the latter as "species, animal; soul, subject to passions; mind, rational; body, composed of air; life-span, eternal"<sup>548</sup>. As "gods never mix with men" (as Plato is reported as saying)," Apuleius attributes to demons the role of mediators- conveying men's prayers to God and God's answers to men<sup>549</sup>. Augustine dismisses these ideas and the magic which serves them as wholly blasphemous<sup>550</sup>. The demons are not to be reckoned greater than men on account of their subtle bodies or elevated abode- if this was the case animals and birds would be considered greater than men too. Divine providence has arranged things thus, so that men may understand that what leads to happy immortality is a heart purified by rational

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<sup>541</sup> Remy p.161

<sup>542</sup> Verwilghen, A. p.170f *Christologie et spiritualité selon Saint Augustin: L'Hymne aux Philippens* Paris 1985; cf. Hardy R.P. *L'Actualité de révélation dans les Tractatus in Johannem* Paris 1974

<sup>543</sup> see Chapter 1.24

<sup>544</sup> see Chapter 1

<sup>545</sup> *civ.* 8.12

<sup>546</sup> *civ.* 8.13

<sup>547</sup> *civ.* 8.14

<sup>548</sup> *civ.* 8.16, 9.8

<sup>549</sup> *civ.* 8.18

<sup>550</sup> *civ.* 8.19

and moral qualities<sup>551</sup>. Augustine goes on to point out the absurdity of the suggestion that gods in the ether are ignorant of men's needs and therefore reliant on the demons' mediation and potential deception: if the demons were able to deceive the gods, the demons would have to be considered greater than the gods; if the gods could resist such deception, then by the same nature they could know the affairs of men<sup>552</sup>. As for the practice of men making statues for the demons to inhabit and animate, Augustine is scathing- by worshipping his own creations, man is sundered from the one true Creator<sup>553</sup>. Underpinning these various arguments is Augustine's conviction that "the supremely important thing in religion is to model oneself on the object of one's worship"<sup>554</sup>. This contention arises from a review of the 'passions' as irrational motions in the soul<sup>555</sup> and (having disposed of conceptions of demons as 'bad gods' or evil mediators in *De civitate dei* 8) is developed in *De civitate dei* 9 when Augustine moves on to consider how many Platonists distinguish between good and bad demons and court the favour of the former with a view to reaching eternity<sup>556</sup>.

31 Following Cicero's resolution of the hair-splitting disputes of Platonists and Stoics<sup>557</sup>, Augustine affirms that "the essential condition of felicity" is for reason to exercise dominion over the passions<sup>558</sup>. Not only are demons, on Apulieus' own admission, subject to every human passion but, in Augustine's opinion, they are steeped in wickedness and incapable of being reformed. There is no such thing as a happy demon because "there is no truth or virtue in the constitution of their souls" with which to subdue the passions<sup>559</sup>. Neither can the demons be of any help in man's pursuit of happiness since they use all their powers to seduce and deceive men<sup>560</sup>. For Augustine, the mediation offered by demons is as topsy-turvy as their very existence<sup>561</sup>. He therefore endorses Plotinus's view that man's temporal body is to be valued over the

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<sup>551</sup> *civ.* 8.15

<sup>552</sup> *civ.* 8.21, 9.16

<sup>553</sup> *civ.* 8.23

<sup>554</sup> *civ.* 8.17

<sup>555</sup> *civ.* 8.17- such 'disturbances' affect demons and men only- the gods are exempt because they are immortal and happy and animals have no reason to be disturbed

<sup>556</sup> *civ.* 9.1-2

<sup>557</sup> Whether the wise man is to 'control' or 'avoid' the passions; cf. Chapter 1.4

<sup>558</sup> *civ.* 9.4

<sup>559</sup> *civ.* 9.3

<sup>560</sup> *civ.* 9.6

<sup>561</sup> *civ.* 9.9- the demons share what is inferior in a living being, a body, with gods, and what is superior in a living being, a rational soul, with men

demons' eternal body because whereas a man's body can die and release the soul to divine blessedness the perpetuity of the demons' body precludes such a release<sup>562</sup>.

32 Apuleius claims that the souls of men are demons and that on death bad men become bad demons and good men become good demons, *eudaimones*<sup>563</sup>. In Augustine's opinion, the latter do not exist because if the demons were truly and fully good they would also be eternally happy and therefore incapable of fulfilling an intermediary role, being so far removed from man who are miserable and mortal<sup>564</sup>. Augustine prefers to interpret 'demon' as Plato does in terms of 'knowing' and he convicts the demons of having knowledge of God without love for him. In contrast to the demons whose arrogance seeks the worship of men for themselves, the angels who wish us men to enjoy the same blessings as they do, continues Augustine, desire sacrifice to be offered not to themselves but to the one true God<sup>565</sup>. Wishing to avoid unnecessary equivocations, Augustine accepts what Christians call 'angels', Platonists call 'gods'- eternal, blessed beings *created* by the Supreme God; the only difference being that Christians maintain that God's will is announced by the holy angels, not the deceitful demons of the Platonists<sup>566</sup>. This clarification opens up Augustine's attack on 'theurgy' in *De civitate dei* 10.

33 According to Augustine, the angels of Scripture wish mankind to share the same blessings as they do. The messages and miracles of the angels, firstly, direct man's love and sacrifice to God, not themselves and, secondly, are to be responded to in simple faith and devout confidence, not by the spells and charms of sorcery or, what was fancifully called, 'theurgy'; by which man was brought into contact with the divine either by raising the visionary in ecstasy or bringing down the divinity through magical arts<sup>567</sup>. Augustine attacks Porphyry's inconsistency on such matters, accusing the Neoplatonist of, on the one hand, advocating theurgy and the advantages of befriending demons and, on the other, questioning the validity of the art and the merits of the demons it employs<sup>568</sup>. The fact that theurgy promised to purify only the spiritual part of

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<sup>562</sup> *civ.* 9.10

<sup>563</sup> *civ.* 9.11- from the Greek *eudaimonia*

<sup>564</sup> *civ.* 9.13

<sup>565</sup> *civ.* 9.20, 10.16

<sup>566</sup> *civ.* 9.23

<sup>567</sup> *civ.* 10.7-9, 16; Bettenson ed. p.383 note 39

<sup>568</sup> *civ.* 10.9-11- Porphyry's commentary on the *Chaldean Oracles* exhibits his interest in theurgy while

man's soul (to see gods), not its intellectual part (to see the supreme God) accounts for both Porphyry's vacillation over the art and Plotinus's outright rejection of it.

34 In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, Augustine does not hesitate to warn his congregation about engaging in pagan practices<sup>569</sup> and any kind of curiosity "that works in spectacles, in theatres, in the sacraments of the devil, in magical arts, in dealings with darkness"<sup>570</sup>. In keeping with the positive character of the morality and ethics presented in these works though, Augustine spends far less time on the evils of sorcery than he does on the merits of Christ's mediation.

35 As God was made man in Christ without any loss of his divinity, insists Augustine repeatedly in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, "Christ himself is at once both man and God"<sup>571</sup>. He thereby fulfils the requirements laid down by Augustine in *De civitate dei* for the mediator between God and man to "have a transient mortality, and a permanent blessedness... And yet he is not the Mediator in that he is the Word; for the Word, being pre-eminently immortal and blessed, is far removed from wretched mortals. He is the Mediator in that he is man"<sup>572</sup>. Augustine maintains that Apuleius was wrong to conceive of the ' yawning gulf ' between gods and men in physical terms and that Plotinus was right to assert that men return to their Father's homeland by becoming like God, because it is by spiritual congruency, not physical elevation, that man ascends to God<sup>573</sup>. With simple imagery and great clarity in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, Augustine's congregation is moved to contemplate these matters:

"The separating medium is sin, the reconciling Mediator is the Lord Jesus Christ. 'For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus'[1Tim. 2:5]. To take away the separating wall, which is sin, that Mediator has come, and the priest has Himself become the sacrifice"<sup>574</sup>.

In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, Augustine argues that it was only by sacrificing the very human nature which he had

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his letter to Anebo of Egypt reveals his various qualms over the practice

<sup>569</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 7.2f

<sup>570</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 2.13

<sup>571</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 78.1, 8.3, 12.8, 14.11, 36.2, 103.2

<sup>572</sup> *civ.* 9.15

<sup>573</sup> *civ.* 9.12, 17, 18

<sup>574</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 41.5

assumed that Christ could, firstly, overcome the devil's power; secondly, confront man's arrogance and anxiety; and, thirdly, enable men to join in his salvific work. To appreciate how these aspects of Christ's mediation- justice, love and participation- are interlinked, each will be considered in turn.

36 According to Augustine in *De trinitate* 4, the devil proved himself to be the mediator of death by persuading man to sin and so bringing his, Satan's, own single death of unrighteousness to precipitate a double death in man- death of the soul because of sin, death of the body as a punishment for sin. In contrast, Christ has shown himself to be the mediator of life through his voluntary death on the cross. By representing the ungodliness of man's inner death- "My God why have you forsaken me?" and encouraging the outer man not to fear those who can kill the body but not the soul, Christ's single death in the flesh overcomes man's double death<sup>575</sup>. Later in *De trinitate* 13, Augustine identifies justice as being the differentiating factor between the mediation of Christ and that of Satan. By imitating Satan's misguided preference for power over justice, man became subject to the devil through the just wrath of God. God himself was to restore the right order of things through the death and resurrection of Christ: "he overcame the devil with justice first and power second, with justice first because *he had no sin* and was most unjustly killed by him; with power because dead he came back to life never to die thereafter"<sup>576</sup>. Convinced on such bases that Christ is the mediator of life in his humanity, Augustine argues in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* that man is liberated from the bondage of sin he inherited from Adam by being reconciled to God through Christ because on the cross God made "Christ Himself, 'who knew no sin, [to be] sin for us'"<sup>577</sup>.

37 In becoming a sacrifice for sin on the cross, Christ, in Augustine's eyes, takes the fundamental principle of his incarnation to its ultimate degree: he became what he was not- sin; without losing what he was- eternally righteous<sup>578</sup>. Since Augustine views sin as nothing<sup>579</sup>, he therefore regards Christ on the cross as nothing. This thinking underpins Augustine's familiar refrain in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* that Christ

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<sup>575</sup> *trin.* 4.1.4-6, 4.3.15

<sup>576</sup> *trin.* 13.4.16-18

<sup>577</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 41.5, Isa. 59:1-2, 2Cor. 5:20-21

<sup>578</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 23.6, *ench.* 40-41

<sup>579</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 1.13

both forms and re-forms man- man who was created from nothing by the Word is re-created from the nothing the Word made flesh became on the cross<sup>580</sup>. Throughout his crucifixion and death though, Christ did not lose the righteousness he had as the eternal Word of God. So while Christ is the mediator between God and men in the humanity he assumed in time, the life Christ mediates to men is the life of righteousness he was eternally begotten with by the Father<sup>581</sup>. On the cross therefore, Augustine envisages a sublime transaction being conducted: "Christ made our sins His sins, that He might make His righteousness our righteousness"<sup>582</sup>. Through this exchange sinners are justified<sup>583</sup>, the ugly are made beautiful<sup>584</sup>, castaways become heirs<sup>585</sup> and those scattered through the first Adam are forged into one by the second Adam's "fire of love"<sup>586</sup>.

38 Charity, proclaims Augustine in *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, is what brought the Word to become flesh in the first place. In order to demonstrate the perfect love which lays down its life for another man, the Word needed a body he could sacrifice<sup>587</sup>. Burnaby stresses how the sin of man which separates him from God is overcome by God's loving approach to man in Christ Jesus<sup>588</sup>. By coming to man in love, God, according to O'Donovan's interpretation of Augustine, seeks to kindle man's love for God- "For there is no greater incentive to love than the other to love first;" especially when the initiative to love is undertaken by a superior for a inferior<sup>589</sup>. In *De trinitate*, Augustine himself roots the mission of Christ the mediator in love: man "needed to be reassured how much God loves us, and what sort of people he loves" lest man, on the first count, despair of the strength of reaching up to God or, on the second, proudly presume he could reach up to God through human strength alone. So, since God has arranged "that the power of charity be brought to perfection in the weakness of humility" assumed by the Word, man is to trust not in his own strength but in the grace of God in Christ<sup>590</sup>. Augustine therefore argues that the City of God founded by Christ

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<sup>580</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 1.12, 15.5, 15.8, 38.8

<sup>581</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 14.1

<sup>582</sup> *en.Ps.* 21.3

<sup>583</sup> *en.Ps.* 109.1-3

<sup>584</sup> *serm.* 27.6 in Harrison p.234

<sup>585</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 2.13

<sup>586</sup> *en.Ps.* 95.15, *Io.ev.tr.* 3.12, 10.11

<sup>587</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 6.13, 7.2

<sup>588</sup> Burnaby p.168-9

<sup>589</sup> *cat.rud.* 4.7 in O'Donovan p.124

<sup>590</sup> *trin.* 4.1.2, 2Cor. 12:9

is built on “the power and excellence of humility... [which is] granted by divine grace”<sup>591</sup>.

39 Ranged against the City of God, maintains Augustine, is “the city of this world, a city which aims at dominion, which holds nations in enslavement, but is itself dominated by that very lust of domination”<sup>592</sup>. The devil mediates this city by tempting man to love self above God and neighbour. The disobedience precipitated by such pride and envy, continues Augustine in *De civitate dei*, only inflames these disordered desires and so makes man an ever-greater slave of sin. In contrast to Satan’s mediation of death and servitude, Christ offers life and liberty through the humility and love which obediently serve God and neighbour because of a love of God above all things<sup>593</sup>. In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* therefore, Augustine describes how the city of God is formed by those who demonstrate their love for Christ by keeping his commandments. It will be separated in place from the city of the unjust- the devil, his angels (the demons) and evil men- at the final judgement but for now is separated “by character, affections, desires, faith, hope, charity”<sup>594</sup>.

40 While the resurrection of the body is deferred until the end times, explains Augustine in *De trinitate*, the resurrection of the soul begins now as it is resuscitated by repentance, renewed in the life of faith and strengthened by good behaviour day by day<sup>595</sup>. Like Christ himself though, argues Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, any new life enjoyed by body or soul are gifts “bestowed gratuitously” on man whose sins merited nothing but death: “faith itself is grace and life eternal is grace for grace”<sup>596</sup>. Similarly, it is with the humility with which Christ overcame the devil that “the body of Christ, which is the Church, conquers her enemies”<sup>597</sup>. Individually or corporately then, insists Augustine, man’s merits are in fact God’s gifts<sup>598</sup>.

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<sup>591</sup> *civ.* 1.Preface

<sup>592</sup> *civ.* 1.Preface

<sup>593</sup> *trin.* 4.3.13, *civ.* 14.28

<sup>594</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 19.18

<sup>595</sup> *trin.* 4.1.5

<sup>596</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 3.9

<sup>597</sup> *en.Ps.* 131.3

<sup>598</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 3.10

41 “But God crowns in us the gifts of his own mercy on condition that we walk with perseverance in that grace which in the first instance we received”<sup>599</sup>. Perseverance, as Augustine would have learned from Paul, brings hope, and hope is not disappointed because the Holy Spirit has poured the love of God into man’s hearts<sup>600</sup>. By bringing believers the fullness of grace, the gift of the Spirit completes the work of Christ the mediator through his body, the Church<sup>601</sup>. So, explains Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, while Christ can work in no man the faith which is counted as righteousness without that man’s co-operation, through the active believer Christ can work even greater works than Christ himself did<sup>602</sup>.

42 Apuleius proposed demonic mediators because he feared that the gods would be defiled by having dealings with men. After pointing out the logical inconsistencies of this position, Augustine goes on to assert in *De civitate dei* that the incarnation of the Word proves that God is not polluted by contact with human nature<sup>603</sup>. Furthermore, whereas the mediation of demons could bring but partial purification of man at best, the mediation of Christ promises to redeem the whole man precisely because the Word took on the whole of human nature, body, soul and mind<sup>604</sup>. In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* therefore, Augustine firstly dismisses heretics like the Apollinarians who question whether Christ took on the whole of human nature<sup>605</sup> and secondly, against Platonic ambitions to escape the body<sup>606</sup>, proclaims that in Christ’s incarnate, resurrected and glorified body man “can at once congratulate his own nature as already immortal in Christ, and cherish the hope that he himself will yet become so through Christ”<sup>607</sup>. Far from contaminating divine nature, the mediation of Christ celebrates the present goodness and future blessedness of human nature.

43 Satan attacked Christ’s flesh, explains Augustine in *De trinitate*, because he failed to tempt Christ’s spirit. In doing so, the devil forfeited his inner authority over

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<sup>599</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 3.10

<sup>600</sup> Rom. 5:5

<sup>601</sup> see *The Roman Missal* Eucharistic Prayer IV p.505 International Committee on English in the Liturgy Inc. Richview Press Limited, Dublin 1974

<sup>602</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 72.2-3

<sup>603</sup> *civ.* 9.16-17

<sup>604</sup> *civ.* 10.9, 27

<sup>605</sup> They denied Christ’s soul was rational- “they took away Christ’s reason by losing their own” (*Io.ev.tr.* 47.9)

<sup>606</sup> *civ.* 12.27, *doctr.chr.* 1.24.24

<sup>607</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 78.3



man<sup>608</sup>. Christians too can expect similar attacks. What Augustine tries to impress on his congregation in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* is that though Christians should never shrink from martyrdom when it is threatened, neither should they undergo it for false motives; after all, Christ himself safeguarded his life and gave it up only when his hour had come<sup>609</sup>.

44 By countenancing worship to a plurality of gods, many Platonists descended into theurgic arts and, against Plato's own directives, sacrificed to evil spirits in order to mollify them. In contrast, declares Augustine in *De civitate dei*, Christians focus their worship on the one true God through the one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, and cast out demons by exorcism, not appeasement<sup>610</sup>. So whereas Porphyry remained confused about the existence of demons and/or the benefits of befriending them, "any Christian old woman would have no hesitation about the fact of their existence, and no reserve about denouncing them"<sup>611</sup>. Throughout *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* therefore, Augustine aims to rouse the Christ who sleeps in the hearts of his congregation, to increase their faith in the one true mediator between God and men<sup>612</sup>.

45 "For Augustine as for the whole Christian Church," observes Portalié, the sacrifice of Calvary is "the first act- and the principal act- of the mediation of Christ"<sup>613</sup>. By his innocent death on the cross, Christ redeemed man from his slavery to the devil<sup>614</sup> and demonstrated a perfect love for man who was still a sinner<sup>615</sup>. By participating in the justice of Christ's humility, claims Augustine, man comes to participate in the power of Christ's glory<sup>616</sup>. By the grace of the mediator, man's iniquitous soul rises now to live the life of righteousness, albeit imperfectly; by grace upon grace, man's weak body rises in eternity with the power not to sin<sup>617</sup>. Through the grace of Christ and the gift of the Spirit, the first Christians worked greater cures and conversions than

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<sup>608</sup> *trin.* 4.3.17

<sup>609</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 28.1

<sup>610</sup> *civ.* 8.12-13, 10.21-22

<sup>611</sup> *civ.* 10.11

<sup>612</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 49.19

<sup>613</sup> Portalié p.164, Eph. 5:2

<sup>614</sup> *trin.* 4.3.17

<sup>615</sup> Rom. 5:8

<sup>616</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 104.1

<sup>617</sup> *civ.* 13.20

Christ did<sup>618</sup> and so too the Church in every age is accompanied by miracles and growth<sup>619</sup>. In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* therefore, Augustine reminds his congregation that, "It is our part, by His grace, to be supplying the service of love and humility" which forgives and prays for man's faults<sup>620</sup>. In doing so, they will be continuing the work of Christ the mediator.

## CONCLUSION

46 In *Confessiones*, Augustine asks to be healed and taught by God through the mediation of Christ<sup>621</sup>. When recommencing *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* in 414, Augustine makes it clear that Christ is "the physician of both souls and bodies" and "the Teacher of love, full of love" because he is the one Mediator between God and man. Fallen man "had need of a 'man' for his healing, but that 'man' who is also God"<sup>622</sup> Augustine therefore interprets the words addressed to the paralysed man by the man Christ Jesus allegorically- "Arise" is "the operation of healing" by which the sinners are made whole, "Take up your bed, and walk" are the two commandments of love given the redeemed so they may lack nothing: bear your neighbour so that he and you may both come to God. Christ was able to heal and teach like this because "He emptied Himself not by losing what he was, but by taking to Himself what He was not"<sup>623</sup>.

47 In his following three homilies on the Gospel of John, *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 18, 19 and 23, Augustine describes in detail the ways in which Christ operates both as a Physician<sup>624</sup> and as a Teacher<sup>625</sup> and provides a unique summary of his moral and ethical thought: to the gift of divine Charity, by which God vivifies man's soul with righteousness, wisdom and holiness, man is to respond in faithful and loving obedience<sup>626</sup>. Yet the topic of these three homilies and that of the three Augustine was to insert later, *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 20, 21 and 22, is the mystery of Christ Jesus: one person, two natures. Man can only be and know himself fully by turning

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<sup>618</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 71.3

<sup>619</sup> *civ.* 22.5f

<sup>620</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 58.5

<sup>621</sup> *conf.* 10.43.68-70

<sup>622</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 17.1, 7

<sup>623</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 17.7-9, 16; 1Tim. 2:5, Gal. 6:2, Eph. 4:2, Phil. 2:6

<sup>624</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 18.1, 11

<sup>625</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 23.8-11

<sup>626</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 19.11-12, 75.5

away from sin to participate in the light of Christ<sup>627</sup>. The repercussions of this for man's pursuit of the happy life are spelt out by Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 23 where, after establishing that "the soul is higher than the body, and higher than the soul is God," he proclaims that: "This is the Christian religion, that one God be worshipped, not many gods, because only one God can make the soul happy. It is made happy by participation of God... not of an angel, but the angel as well as man of the same source"<sup>628</sup>. Since man was "not able to reach unto God," because his body was dead through weakness and his soul was dead through sin, God became man in Christ, "Word, rational mind, and flesh. This is the whole Christ. Let your soul rise again from iniquity by that which is God, your body from corruption by that which is man"<sup>629</sup>. For Augustine, no pagan god nor philosophical demon can offer man stability in the truth because none is either true God or true man. Christ Jesus is both. As the one true mediator between God and man, he offers eternal salvation and beatitude to the whole man, body, soul and mind. In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, Augustine seeks to preach Christ, the whole Christ and nothing but the whole Christ, because he is the Truth on which the joy of the happy life is based<sup>630</sup>.

48 "That land is the life of Christ, the way is Christ's death; that land is the habitation of Christ, the way is Christ's suffering. He that refuses the way, why does he seek the fatherland?"<sup>631</sup>

Since man was cast out from his heavenly homeland because of pride, he is to return by the way of humility described by Christ<sup>632</sup>. In his commentary on the psalms of ascent, Augustine describes humility as being man's "guardian in every temptation"<sup>633</sup>: while the proud rejoice in false illusions of themselves and attempt to bend God to their will, the humble confess both the misery of sin and the glory of God as they seek to bend their will to God's. This is why the humble and poor in spirit have no love for the world, only a hunger for the righteousness which is God himself<sup>634</sup>. Similarly, continues Augustine, whilst the proud seek wisdom prematurely and become puffed up

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<sup>627</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 22.10

<sup>628</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 23.5

<sup>629</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 23.6

<sup>630</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 47.3

<sup>631</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 28.5

<sup>632</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 25.15, *trin.* 4.3.15

<sup>633</sup> *en.Ps.* 120.14

with what they think they have learned, the humble are willing to be nursed on the milk of Christ's humanity- that is, they will to listen to and obey his commandments (performing works of mercy, preserving Church unity, trusting rather than tempting God)- so they may come to the meat of his divinity. Humility thereby safeguards and nurtures both the moral and intellectual development of man. "Our very perfection is humility"<sup>635</sup>.

49 Man's perfection is in fact Christ, "the Master of humility both by word and example"<sup>636</sup>. In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, Augustine explains how Christ observed perfect humility from the moment he emptied himself to take the form of a slave right through to his death on the cross<sup>637</sup> by always preaching and practising not his own doctrine and will but those of his Father<sup>638</sup>. This was only right and fitting- "For if He had come to point out the way of humility, and to make himself the way of humility; in all things had humility to be fulfilled in Him"<sup>639</sup>. Consequently, man should order both his intellectual and moral development to and through the man Christ Jesus. Intellectually, observes Augustine, man is required not to explain Christ "but [to] continue in faith" in him- God himself will teach those who continue to believe in Christ despite their not being able to understand him or his teaching fully<sup>640</sup>. Morally, man is to seek not his own glory but Christ's- scrupulous observance of the ten commandments or of "the virtues and the vices" prescribed by pagan philosophers is worthless unless it is referred to Christ<sup>641</sup>. Augustine holds that the intellectual humility which trusts Christ's teaching and the moral humility which obeys Christ's commandments stand or fall together- they are the two sides of faith working through love to eternal righteousness<sup>642</sup>.

50 Lest men "faint in labour," asserts Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, Christ himself feeds them

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<sup>634</sup> *en.Ps.* 121.8, 124.2, 131.24

<sup>635</sup> *en.Ps.* 130.3, 9, 13, 14

<sup>636</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 59.1

<sup>637</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 104.2

<sup>638</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 29.2, 22.15

<sup>639</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 5.3

<sup>640</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 45.7

<sup>641</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 45.2, 3

<sup>642</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 45.15

through the Scriptures and the sacraments<sup>643</sup>. By partaking of the Truth and Life of Christ, man becomes better through “the grace of the Mediator”<sup>644</sup>. Augustine stresses the activity of the Holy Spirit in all these processes. He it is who guides man into understanding the Teacher’s revelation of God as Trinity<sup>645</sup>; he it is who administers the Physician’s remedies by pouring the love of God into men’s hearts to ensure they do not “profess one thing and do another”<sup>646</sup>. By continually stimulating man’s growth in, on the one hand, knowledge of God and, on the other, good will and virtue, the Holy Spirit is constantly fostering man’s intellectual and moral purification. For Augustine then, if the Church is to continue Christ’s work of mediation fruitfully it must remain united in mind and heart under the guidance of the Holy Spirit<sup>647</sup>.

51 “This then is the original evil: man regards himself as his own light, and turns away from that light which would make man himself a light if he would set his heart on it”<sup>648</sup>.

This Light of Truth and Life has made himself *the way* back to Truth and Life for fallen man by becoming flesh in Christ Jesus<sup>649</sup>. Augustine maintains that the way described by the Light incarnate is one of humility and obedience and simply invites man to go “By Christ the man, to Christ God”<sup>650</sup>; to rise “from [Christ’s] example, unto his divinity”<sup>651</sup>.

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<sup>643</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 17.5, *ep.Io.tr.* 1.5

<sup>644</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 26.4, 19

<sup>645</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 104.1

<sup>646</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 4.2

<sup>647</sup> see Chapter 4.16-19

<sup>648</sup> *civ.* 14.13

<sup>649</sup> Jn. 1:1, 14, 14:6; *Io.ev.tr.* 34.4-5

<sup>650</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 13.4

<sup>651</sup> *en.Ps.* 119.1

# CHAPTER 4: THE CHURCH

## INTRODUCTION

1. Augustine argues that, like any man striving for happiness, “The whole life of a Christian is one of holy desire”<sup>652</sup>. What gives definitive direction to Christian desire is Jesus Christ. Sublime as it is to believe the Holy One has been made man so man may be made holy<sup>653</sup>, Rawls would insist that, “A theory however elegant and economical must be rejected or revised if it is untrue; likewise laws and institutions no matter how efficient and well-arranged must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust”<sup>654</sup>. While acknowledging the truth in these sentiments, Augustine would nevertheless maintain, firstly, that the truth of the doctrine of Christ the mediator can be approached only by faith working through love and, secondly, that the justice of humility is what shapes the laws and institutions of the Church founded on Christ the mediator. In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, Augustine directs these challenges firstly and foremostly at Christians themselves. Individual and ecclesial life must reflect Christ’s life of love and humility if Christians are to understand their own faith<sup>655</sup> and communicate it to others<sup>656</sup>.

2 The twofold nature of Christ’s mediation presents an unavoidable difficulty though. With respect to the Head of the Body, the mediation is perfect because though tempted in every way Christ did not sin<sup>657</sup>; but regarding the Members of the body, the mediation is not perfect because Christians have sinned in many and varied ways. Augustine accepts that the weakness of the Church’s individual and collective witness can often obscure the clarity and charity of her message but insists that the abiding presence of the Son and the Spirit guarantee the efficacy of the Church’s sacraments

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<sup>652</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 4.10; see Chapter 1.36-37

<sup>653</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 2.15, *en.Ps.* 121.5

<sup>654</sup> Rawls, J. p.3 *A Theory of Justice* Oxford University Press 1973; To meet his own criteria, Rawls advances an elaborate thought experiment. Yet neither his ‘original position’(pp.17-22), ‘veil of ignorance’(pp.136-142) nor ‘maximin rule’ (Rawls argues that given the possibility of arranging a human society from its very outset a person would arrange its principles of social justice in such a way so as to ensure that the maximum benefits of that society would be open in potential even to those of minimal standing therein- as this would safeguard an individual from destitution lest he or she be assigned to the lowest place in that society by an enemy; pp.152-7) recognise what for Augustine is the most important aspect of man, namely, his fallen nature.

<sup>655</sup> The subject of this chapter

<sup>656</sup> The subject of Chapter 5

<sup>657</sup> Heb. 4:15

and the coherence of her teaching. Of his congregation therefore, Augustine does not demand perfection but rather urges perseverance. This present chapter examines how Augustine does this in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, by mapping out a Christian life of prayer and work, insisting that charity and unity are inseparable and rooting any personal and communal sanctity the Church enjoys in the grace of Christ the mediator.

## PRAYER AND WORK

3 The Church is founded on “The Lord Himself, the Teacher of love, full of love,” who commands man to love God and love neighbour as himself: “These must always be pondered, meditated, practised and fulfilled. The love of God comes first in the order of enjoying; but in the order of doing, the love of our neighbour comes first”<sup>658</sup>. As Augustine makes clear here in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, Christian living demands both contemplation and action. Christ himself set this example during his earthly life of constant prayer<sup>659</sup> and untiring work<sup>660</sup>. Christ, claims Augustine, continues to pray<sup>661</sup> and work<sup>662</sup> in and through the members of his Church. This twin life of work and prayer reflects to some degree the mystery of God who Augustine recognised as being ever-active yet always at rest<sup>663</sup>.

4 Being the son of many tears<sup>664</sup>, Augustine appreciated fully the power of prayer. In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, he proposes prayer as a means of resisting the devil’s temptations, as a means of pumping out the bilge of sin, and as a great tool for winning the deaf and ignorant to Christ and his Church<sup>665</sup>. Furthermore, prayer not only inspires man’s love of neighbour- by helping man recognise that all men are sons of the most high God<sup>666</sup>- but also its fitting conclusion- for while the love of neighbour purges man’s eye to see God, it is only by a certain solitude of the mind that man can partake

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<sup>658</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 17.7, 8

<sup>659</sup> Heb. 5:7- prayer permeated Christ’s daily life (Lk. 4:16, 5:16, 6:12) and mission (Mt. 14:19, 26:26, 30, 36-44)

<sup>660</sup> Jn. 5:17

<sup>661</sup> *en.Ps.* 85.1

<sup>662</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 72.2, 71.3

<sup>663</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 17.14

<sup>664</sup> *conf.* 3.12.21

<sup>665</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 10.1, 12.14, 13.18

<sup>666</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 65.1

of this vision<sup>667</sup>. By giving time to prayer, man gives himself the opportunity both to receive the love of God which the Holy Spirit looks to impart and to recognise that all man's good works are the product of God's graces<sup>668</sup>. Prayer thus keeps man humble and loving. Augustine regards the constant interplay of prayer and work as important to all areas of Christian life and essential for the understanding of Scripture<sup>669</sup>.

5 Through prayer, explains Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, a man seeks to submit himself to God's will<sup>670</sup> and humbly obey his commandments. Hence, in *Confessiones*, he observes that the aim of prayer is not personal advantage but the wish "to be of use in love to the brethren"<sup>671</sup>. Man, observes Augustine in *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, serves both friend and enemy most usefully by continually loving each to an eternal, not temporal, reward. By thus ensuring that charity has no intermission<sup>672</sup>, man, who cannot always be praying formally, will always be continuing Christ's work of doing the Father's will<sup>673</sup>. Furthermore, adds Augustine, the good works which arise from humble prayer increase the Church's desire for her bridegroom's return- renouncing the adulterer she becomes a virgin in faith, hope and love and can now truly begin to pray, "Thy kingdom come"<sup>674</sup>.

6 For Augustine, prayer transforms the nature of Christian work. By remembering God through prayer, Christian attitudes to both private and public relationships are transformed. "[T]rue friendship," points out Augustine in *Confessiones*, is not simply a matter of human amicability but demands being bound together in the love of God which is poured into men's hearts by the Holy Spirit<sup>675</sup>. Similarly true peace, Augustine observes in *De civitate dei*, is not merely a matter of social agreement but requires living and loving the just peace of God<sup>676</sup>. This is why the sacrifice of Christians, the Eucharist, is made up of acts of compassion to one's neighbour or oneself *when directed towards God*<sup>677</sup>. Just as God proved his love for all men by coming to them in

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<sup>667</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 17.11

<sup>668</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 3.8-10

<sup>669</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 32.6

<sup>670</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 52.3

<sup>671</sup> *conf.* 11.2.3

<sup>672</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 8.10, 3; *en.Ps.* 37.13-14

<sup>673</sup> *Jn.* 4:34

<sup>674</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 9.2

<sup>675</sup> *conf.* 4.4.7

<sup>676</sup> *civ.* 19.12

<sup>677</sup> *civ.* 10.6





Christ while all were still enemies because of sin, so, Augustine reminds his congregation in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, Christians are to pray and work for enemies as well as friends, they are to act compassionately to all<sup>678</sup>.

7 In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* therefore, Augustine charges his congregation with the responsibility of continually going in and out of Christ- to be going into him through prayer and contemplation in accord with faith; and to be going out of him through loving works which accord with that same faith<sup>679</sup>. By allowing his faith to work through the love of God and of neighbour in this manner, the Christian purifies himself intellectually and morally and brings others along the way of Christ as man to the truth of Christ as God<sup>680</sup>. To undertake this mission successfully, the Church, Augustine maintained, must be united in heart and mind. Any lack of unity he attributed to a lack of charity.

## DONATISM

8 Augustine had to contend with many threats to Church unity. During the first half of his episcopate, the most immediate threat to the Catholic congregation of Hippo was that posed by Donatism. The whole of *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* and the early sections of *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*<sup>681</sup> were delivered against the backdrop of this controversy and give direct insights into how Augustine applied the ethics of Christian love on the front line of a difficult and dangerous battle. The Donatist schism was defiantly righteous, peculiar to Africa and often violent.

9 Those Christian clergy who 'handed over' the Scriptures to the Romans during the Great Persecution of 303-305 were decried as *traditores* by those who did not. In 311-312 the *traditor* Bishop of Carthage, Mensurius, died. Led by Secundus of Tigisi, Primate of Numidia, the rigorists rejected Mensurius' successor (on the grounds that one of the consecrating bishops, Felix of Aphungi, was a *traditor*) and elected in his place Majorinus, a lector. He was succeeded by Donatus. During his forty years as Bishop of Carthage the dispute entrenched itself in North Africa. Parmenianus, who succeeded Donatus in 355, was bishop in Carthage and Procluleianus bishop in Hippo

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<sup>678</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 110.6-7, Rom. 5:8

<sup>679</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 45.14, Eph. 3:17, Gal. 5:6, Mt. 5:6

<sup>680</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 10.1-2

when Augustine was ordained to the episcopate in 396. By this time, both sides had spilt blood: the Catholics most notoriously during the 'Time of Macarius'; the Donatists, sporadically but brutally, through the extremist Circumcellions<sup>682</sup>. Outnumbered by Donatists locally and regionally and within earshot of the Donatist basilica in Hippo<sup>683</sup>, neither Augustine nor his Catholic congregation could ignore the controversy.

10 Having neither handed over the Scriptures during times of persecution nor compromised with the world since, the Donatists saw themselves as the true successors of the apostles and as the righteous remnant of the new Israel. In Africa, it was they, the Donatists, who represented the Church of the Martyrs; it was the Catholics who were in schism and it was their clergy and sacraments that were invalid. In proposing themselves as the true Church in Africa, the Donatists continued the rigorist tradition of Tertullian and appealed frequently to the views and practices of Cyprian.

11 In his Montanist period<sup>684</sup>, Tertullian condemned those who even contemplated escaping martyrdom while commending those who chose it in preference to military conscription. Tertullian became even more rigorous after leaving the Montanists but the richness of his authentic Christian doctrine ensured he enjoyed much respect after his death. Less polemical but more pastoral, Cyprian's concern for the body of bishops to remain in unity with the Roman See led him, against much popular local rigorism, to decree that those who, during the persecution of Decius, had either sacrificed to the emperor's statue rather than face martyrdom (*lapsi*) or had circumvented the problem through the acquisition of false papers (*libellatici*) were to be readmitted to the Church after completing suitable penance. With regard to heretics though, Cyprian, in opposition to Stephen, bishop of Rome, but backed by the entire African episcopate, made rebaptism a condition of readmittance<sup>685</sup>. While Donatists played up any rigorism Tertullian and Cyprian had advocated, Catholics emphasised how these two African Fathers, together with Optatus and others, affirmed the unique status of the Roman See.

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<sup>681</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 1-16

<sup>682</sup> Brown p.228-9; Augustine himself avoided a Circumcellion ambush inadvertently by taking a wrong route- see *ench.* 17

<sup>683</sup> *ep.* 29.11

<sup>684</sup> By preaching absolute chastity and total separation from the world, the charismatic-prophetic movement started by Monatus in Phrygia showed itself less than orthodox

<sup>685</sup> Beatrice, P.F. p.142-148

12 The mutual hostility between Donatists and Catholics carried on unabated until 405 when the edict of Emperor Honorius ordered reconciliation between the two churches and for the first time decreed Donatism as 'heretical'. The unleashing of anti-heretical law against the Donatists led to, amongst other things, the confiscation of property, the prohibition of assemblies and the exiling of clergy. Pre-empting a softening of these measures after the fall of Rome in 410, Augustine and Aurelius of Carthage pressed the emperor for a conference to clarify matters. The meeting in Carthage the following year of 385 Donatist bishops and 386 Catholic bishops under the presidency of Marcellinus, a strong Catholic and good friend of Augustine's, was destined to produce but one result. The renewal of the Edict of Unity in 412 led to the re-criminalisation of Donatism and its rapid decline. While Augustine's approach to the controversy certainly appeared to stiffen during the previous two decades, in essence his principle throughout remained that which he declared in *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, "Love, and do what you will"<sup>686</sup>.

13 Augustine's passion for truth meant that his first priority in approaching the Donatists was to establish the facts of the controversy. In this respect, his primary source on the matter, *On the Donatist Schism*<sup>687</sup> by Optatus of Mileu, was far from perfect. To correct its inaccuracies, Augustine made several journeys to collect and collate first-hand evidence. Furthermore, to cover his own back, Augustine had to make sure his own Catholic clergy gave no scandal. So he moved with Aurelius of Carthage to introduce a series of disciplinary canons in a council of 393. In dealing with the Donatists over the following fifteen years, Augustine, according to Brown, turned increasingly towards a policy of religious coercion. Brown says Augustine's initial letters and invitations to debate were rightly rejected by the Donatists as empty diplomacy and suggests Augustine's "profoundly pessimistic conclusion" on Fallen man (and his consequent need for human authority and divine discipline for appropriate social and moral living) precipitated the bishop's hardening attitude to the Donatists. Brown does note though that Augustine rooted his *disciplina*<sup>688</sup> in Scriptural accounts of God's disciplining of the Ancient Israelites, had defended the policy years earlier

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<sup>686</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 7.8

<sup>687</sup> Two editions, 365-7 and 385

<sup>688</sup> The "corrective process of 'teaching', *eruditio*, and warning, *admonitio*, which might even include fear, constraint, and external inconvenience: 'Let constraint be found outside; it is inside that the will is born'"(Brown p.236, *serm.* 112.8)

against the Manichees and confided “in a long, depressed letter to Paulinus of Nola” around 408 that decisions whether or not to punish were full of foreboding<sup>689</sup>. That decisions *not* to act are often as important as those to act must always be borne in mind when evaluating the words and actions of Augustine the Bishop relating to the Donatist controversy.

14 Preached as the effects of the 405 Edict of Unity would have been taking firm hold, *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 1-16 and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* 1-10 provide excellent insights into how Augustine believed the Catholics of Hippo should behave towards their Donatist neighbours. Like the rest of his morality and ethics, Augustine’s advice is based on his understanding of the missions of the Son and the Spirit. John’s account of the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist presents Augustine with an ideal opportunity to instruct his congregation in these matters.

15 Humility is Augustine’s first concern. In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, he interprets Christ’s own baptism both as a reproach to the proud who presume their personal virtue puts them above baptism and as “an example of humility” which is to be imitated<sup>690</sup>. While the Donatists have done this, what they have failed to do in Augustine’s eyes is remain humble- unlike John the Baptist who urged his disciples to follow Christ, Donatists proudly seek their own glory rather than Christ’s<sup>691</sup>. This is because the Donatists failed to learn what John did through the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a Dove at Christ’s baptism; namely, that while the power of Christ’s baptism is given to no one, its ministration is given “both to good and bad” lest the morally or intellectually gifted proudly disdain to be baptised by those they consider to be inferiors<sup>692</sup>. This is why for Augustine the baptism of the *traditores* remained valid, for it is *Christ himself* who baptises, not the particular minister<sup>693</sup>. Just as water passing over stones or light passing through an object retain their purity, argues Augustine against the Donatists, so Christ himself guarantees the spiritual value of the sacraments<sup>694</sup>. While it is indeed far more preferable for the presiding minister to be righteous than unrighteous, adulterers, drunkards and all manner of heretics have

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<sup>689</sup> Brown p.228-243; especially p.238 note 6, p.239 note 7, p.243 note 3

<sup>690</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 4.13-14, 5.3, 13.4, 13.6

<sup>691</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 6.13-17, 7.8

<sup>692</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 5.8-11

<sup>693</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 5.13

performed valid baptisms: "That sacrament is so sacred that not even the ministration of a murderer pollutes it"<sup>695</sup>.

16 Eager to employ his moral principle that faith without love profits man nothing<sup>696</sup>, Augustine goes on in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* to make much of the fact that the Dove descended on Jesus *after* his baptism: baptism profits man nothing unless he is prepared to continue in charity *after* baptism by maintaining unity with "the Church, which is figured in the dove"<sup>697</sup>. For Augustine, the Church so figured is not the one confined to Africa, the Donatist Church, but the one spread through all nations, the Catholic Church. He cites the gift of tongues bestowed on the disciples by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as proof that the true Church of Christ is that which speaks to all nations<sup>698</sup>. Augustine has no wish to rebaptise anyone because the Catholic Church recognises the validity of the Donatists' baptism, but he does desire that all come in to the Catholic Church so the baptism conferred by Christ once and for all may bear fruit by serving the Lord in the Spirit<sup>699</sup>. At present, Augustine fears all the almsgiving and suffering of the Donatists are in vain because they are for Donatus, not Christ<sup>700</sup>.

17 When renewing his attacks on Donatism along similar lines in *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, Augustine emphasises the unity between Christ and his Church; holding or abandoning one means holding or abandoning the other. To maintain unity with Christ therefore it is imperative that Christians bear one another in the charity which preserves ecclesial unity<sup>701</sup>. By failing to go out to the whole world as instructed by Christ, the Donatists, according to Augustine, have gone out from Christ and so from his body, the Church<sup>702</sup>. Through being "contrary to Christ" they have shown themselves to be nothing but "antichrists"<sup>703</sup>. Augustine was well aware that the number of antichrists- those who confess Christ in word but not in deed<sup>704</sup>- in his own congregation had been swollen by those attending under pain of the Edict of

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<sup>694</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 5.15

<sup>695</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 5.15-19

<sup>696</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 6.21; see Chapter 3.11

<sup>697</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 6.14, 6

<sup>698</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 6.10-11

<sup>699</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 6.16-17

<sup>700</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 6.23

<sup>701</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 1.12

<sup>702</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 3.7

<sup>703</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 3.4

<sup>704</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 3.9

Unity and so he charges each person present “to question his own conscience, whether he be an antichrist”<sup>705</sup>. The first part of this question concerns the Son and the fault line of Augustine’s entire moral and ethical thought- does man love Christ or the world?<sup>706</sup>. The second part concerns the Spirit and the true motives beneath men’s actions: do their apparent good works spring from the root of charity or not?<sup>707</sup>. Augustine directs such questions not only at the former or would-be Donatists before him but to the whole of his congregation, each of whom must be continually guided within by God alone<sup>708</sup>. As these questions were posed by Augustine in the sections of *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* delivered during Holy Week 407, they would also have had a special significance for the catechumens and any others (including legitimate convert Donatists) seeking full communion with the Catholic Church, all of whom would have been initiated or received at the end of that same week at the Easter Vigil.

18 So then, while Augustine recognised the specific problems presented by Donatists, the demands he made of them were no greater or no less than those he made of his present or potential Catholic congregation. In keeping with the rest of his moral theory and applied ethics, Augustine rooted the question in man’s will: “of his own will is each either an antichrist or in Christ”<sup>709</sup>. Only God, and, to a lesser extent, the individual himself, can judge a man’s will correctly<sup>710</sup>. The decisions of any other parties will always be highly dubious. Yet for the sake of the whole, the leaders of any community are obligated to exercise discipline over errant members. According to Augustine in *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, the failure of a master to beat his servant, a father to discipline his son or a man to rebuke his neighbour when each is required “is not charity, but mere feebleness”<sup>711</sup>. Augustine declares that charity should be as fervent to amend error as it is to celebrate truth. “But even if you be severe at any time, let it be because of love, for correction. For this cause was charity betokened by the Dove which descended on the Lord... The dove has no gall: yet with beaks and wings she fights for her young; hers is fierceness without bitterness”<sup>712</sup>. It is with the “fierceness of charity,” asserts Augustine, that both family and ecclesial discipline

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<sup>705</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 3.4

<sup>706</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 3.10

<sup>707</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 6.3

<sup>708</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 3.13

<sup>709</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 3.5

<sup>710</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 6.2

<sup>711</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 7.11

should be enforced. So having been taught by the Holy Spirit that rebaptism is unnecessary because Christ himself baptises once and for all through his minister, the Catholic Church has been moved to convict those, like the Donatists, who do not abide by such teaching<sup>713</sup>. In this context of discipline being bidden and guided by charity Augustine sets the precept: "Love, and do what you will." Through such charity men are lead to understand when, on the one hand, patience and peace are called for and when, on the other, confrontation and correction are needed<sup>714</sup>.

19 If the Donatists truly loved Christ, argues Augustine at the end of *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, they would keep his commandments to preach to the whole world. By claiming to be the righteous remnant of the New Israel while restricting their charity to Africa, the Donatists are in effect seeking to kiss the Head of the Body while stamping on the Members of the Body. This honours no-one. Just as the proud Hagar was disciplined by Sarah and told by an angel to return to her mistress, so Augustine defends the Church's right to discipline the Donatists together with any proud heretics and tells them all to return to their mistress, the Catholic Church<sup>715</sup>. When citing the same Scriptural precedent in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 11, Augustine says that since the affliction carried out by Sarah and the Church is done for the good of their respective rebels it does not amount to persecution<sup>716</sup>. In a rather uncomfortable conclusion to this same homily, Augustine denies knowledge of the particular facts surrounding certain Donatist 'martyrs' and defends the sufferings at the hands of the Catholic Church endured by any Donatists on the above 'for their own good' principle<sup>717</sup>.

20 Having championed the primacy of conscience and knowing only too well the vagaries of the human will, Augustine could never be fully comfortable with any policy of outright religious coercion. However, having recognised fallen man's need for external authority in general life and a bishop's responsibility to protect the flock entrusted to him in ecclesial life, Augustine did cite Imperial laws to support his case that heretics and schismatics should be compelled to come in. Brown explains how

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<sup>712</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 7.11, Mt. 3:16

<sup>713</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 7.11

<sup>714</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 7.8

<sup>715</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 10.8-10

<sup>716</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 11.13

Augustine justified himself in doing so against the Donatists by pointing out how they themselves had appealed to the very same laws in their battle with the Maximianist schismatics in 394-5<sup>718</sup>. Furthermore, just over a decade later in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, Augustine determines that it is the duty of a Christian King to protect the Church from heretics<sup>719</sup>. Circumcellion violence and the evident success of the Edict of Unity all contributed to Augustine's increasing use of *disciplina* against the Donatists, but what must be remembered is that Augustine found the whole Donatist argument increasingly obstinate and pathetic. It was plainly inconsistent for Donatists to hold aloof from the Catholic Church because of the presence therein of adulterers, drunkards, usurers and the like when Donatists acknowledged the presence and the baptising validity of the same in their own ranks<sup>720</sup>. Meanwhile any Donatist claims to charity were flatly contradicted by their rending of unity<sup>721</sup>. Saddened and irritated as he was by Donatism, Augustine was never overly distracted by it. As *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* in particular reveals, his primary concern remained the charity which God is and the grace by which the Father wishes to adopt all into eternity through his only Son<sup>722</sup>. The absence of any direct attacks on Donatism in the middle and later sections of *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, delivered in 414 and 419 respectively, suggests that Donatism became a decreasing threat to Augustine's congregation after the renewal of the Edict of Unity in 412<sup>723</sup>.

## HERESY

21 In *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, Augustine states that Christ, motivated by pure charity, came in the flesh and underwent death on the cross in order to gather all into one. Hence to reject charity or to rend unity amount to the same thing: denying Christ came in the flesh<sup>724</sup>. This somewhat forced interpretation of 1Jn. 4:2-3 pushes Augustine's identification of the physical Christ with the visible Church to its limits. By it, he accuses Arians, Eunomians, Macedonians, Cataphrygians and Novatianists of confessing Christ in word, not in deed: each of these groupings is

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<sup>717</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 11.15

<sup>718</sup> Brown p.228

<sup>719</sup> The Donatists had been branded as heretics by the Edict of Unity

<sup>720</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 6.12

<sup>721</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 2.3

<sup>722</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 8.14

<sup>723</sup> Pockets of Donatism survived into C.6th and C.7th

<sup>724</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 6.13



prepared to confess that Christ Jesus came in the flesh, but none of them is willing to maintain unity with the body of Christ dispersed throughout the world. By going out from the Catholic Church, each group has shown itself to be antichrist<sup>725</sup>.

22 Several years later in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, Augustine confronts Arians and Sabellians with the criteria of apostolic succession. To avoid shipwreck on either heresy, Augustine says the catholic faith steers between them by affirming what is true and condemning what is false in each through the use of Scripture. “‘I and the Father are one.’ Not different in nature, because *one*; not one person, because *are*.” This faith, he says, comes from the doctrine of the apostles, is received through a line of succession and is transmitted soundly to posterity<sup>726</sup>. A little earlier in the same middle section of *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, Augustine, amid a highly allegorical interpretation of Christ’s Feeding of the Five Thousand in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, says that in eating all they could the crowds took in that amount of Christ’s teaching each could manage while the scraps collected at the meal’s end into twelve baskets represent how “those matters of more hidden meaning which the multitudes could not take in” were collected by the twelve apostles and are preserved in the Church which is descended from them<sup>727</sup>. Augustine would maintain that the fullness of Christ’s teaching, the fullness of truth, subsists in the Catholic Church because this is the Christian community which has preserved apostolic succession. By the same token, Augustine would regard the Catholic Church as the authentic interpreter of Scripture and Tradition<sup>728</sup>.

23 In the later dictated sections of *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, Augustine reflects in measured tones on the uncomfortable but necessary discipline the Church is called on to observe. Basing himself on Christ’s treatment of Judas, Augustine explains that while it is necessary for the Church to bear false brethren, situations do arise when the Church is “compelled by urgent reasons to separate some of them even before the harvest... it is not spitefulness, but charity, that troubles [Christ’s] spiritual members in scandals of this kind; lest perchance, in separating some of the tares, any of the wheat

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<sup>725</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 7.13, 12

<sup>726</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 37.6, 36.8-9

<sup>727</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 26.4

<sup>728</sup> see Introduction 5

should also be uprooted with it”<sup>729</sup>. Just as civil authorities punish criminals for the good both of the individual and of society, so, maintains Augustine, the Church disciplines her erring members out of love both for them and the remainder of the body<sup>730</sup>. In re-working the ‘Love, and do what you like’ precept he had formulated against the Donatists to combat other schisms and heresies, Augustine was constantly seeking the right balance between justice and mercy. When discussing the philosophers’ views on ‘compassion’ in *De civitate dei*, Augustine determines it to be a virtue only “when compassion is shown without detriment to justice”<sup>731</sup>. Such things meet perfectly in God because he is the Truth and Charity from which justice and mercy arise respectively. By contrast, in Augustine’s opinion, man flounders in such areas because his intellect and will have been disordered by sin. This is why the younger Augustine had rejected the ‘perfectionism’ of Neoplatonism<sup>732</sup> and why the older Augustine was to withstand so resolutely its reappearance in the guise of Pelagianism.

24 This movement took its name, but certainly not all its teaching, from the British monk, Pelagius. He himself had first entered ecclesial controversy in 394 in Palestine when arguing against Jerome that the married state was equal to, not less than, the celibate one. What underpinned this argument and what was to put Pelagius in ever better standing with Imperial aristocracy, especially in Rome where he lived for many years, was the conviction that every Christian was not only called to perfection but could achieve it. In suggesting man could perfect himself through his own moral and intellectual capacities, Pelagius drew on classical philosophy and “denied that the original sin of Adam and Eve affected human nature; for Pelagius, original sin consists in an ‘imitation’ of Adam and can be eliminated by an ‘imitation’ of Christ. He therefore taught that baptism was not needed for the remission of any ‘original’ guilt”<sup>733</sup>. For those adults who chose baptism out of their own free wills and therein received the gift of faith, what the sacrament promised was a definitive break with the past. As personal sins were remitted, man’s knowledge of how life ought to be lived

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<sup>729</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 61.1

<sup>730</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 88.2-4

<sup>731</sup> *civ.* 9.5

<sup>732</sup> see Introduction 32

<sup>733</sup> Clark 1 p.48

and the ability of his free will to live correctly were restored to him by God's grace. Man could now be perfect as his heavenly Father was perfect<sup>734</sup>.

25 Such teaching appealed to those Christians who felt that the Church had become swollen with many people attending only because Christianity had become the established religion of the Roman Empire. Reassured by Pelagius that they could reach the clear and demanding moral precepts of Scripture through their own efforts, 'committed' Christians saw an opportunity to distance themselves from 'nominal' adherents and revive 'authentic' Christianity. Brown suggests that the message of Pelagius was to flourish still further in the confused atmosphere surrounding and following the Fall of Rome in 410, because it offered "the individual absolute certainty through absolute obedience"<sup>735</sup>. Pelagius himself left Rome in 411 and after berthing at Hippo (Augustine was not there at that time) he sailed on to Palestine. His companion, Celestius, did stay on in North Africa and applied to join the priesthood in Carthage. He was refused admission because amid debates on the origin of the soul he had questioned how one person could inherit the guilt of another and so by inference had questioned the necessity of infant baptism. "The six condemned propositions which he had refused to withdraw were to form with Pelagius' *On Nature*, the basis of Augustine's case against Pelagius"<sup>736</sup>. Asked by Governor Marcellinus in Winter 411 to comment on the views of Celestius, Augustine produced *De peccatorum meritis et remissione et de baptismo paruulorum*. Herein, claims Brown, Pelagianism became a coherent system of thought for the first time<sup>737</sup>. Having identified the enemy, Augustine attacked it in books<sup>738</sup>, homilies<sup>739</sup> and letters<sup>740</sup>. *De natura et gratia* (415) marked Augustine's first attack on Pelagius himself and was indicative of how the controversy was to develop. Pelagius was condemned at synods and councils in Carthage (416), Rome (417), Carthage again (417/418) and finally at the ecumenical councils of Ephesus (431) and Orange (529).

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<sup>734</sup> Mt. 5:48

<sup>735</sup> Brown p.347

<sup>736</sup> Brown p.344-5; *On Nature* was Pelagius' response to Augustine's 'Command what you will, give what you command' statement in *Confessiones* which the former interpreted as tolerating sin as 'only too human'- see Brown p.343

<sup>737</sup> Brown p.345

<sup>738</sup> *De spiritu et littera* (412)

<sup>739</sup> Two sermons on original sin and infant baptism (413)

<sup>740</sup> ep. 157 to Hilarius (414)

26 Like Donatism before it, Pelagianism hankered after a Church free from every spot and stain. In contrast, Augustine's re-reading of Paul in the early 390's confirmed what personal experience had suggested to him, that no individual, let alone any institution, including the Church, could exist in such a pristine state in this temporal realm. Regarding personal and ecclesial purity therefore, Augustine was to re-work many of the arguments he had made against the Donatists against the Peligians. In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 14 for example, delivered in Winter 406/7, when the pride of the Donatists was uppermost in Augustine's mind<sup>741</sup>, he reminds his congregation, firstly, that Christ alone lived without sin and secondly, that apart from sin for which they themselves are responsible, everything is a gift from God, "And if you have received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?" [1Cor. 4:7]"<sup>742</sup>. When preaching the middle sections of *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* in 414, by which time the Pelagian controversy was forcing itself evermore insistently onto the Church's agenda, Augustine again refers to 1Cor. 4:7 to underline the facts that a man's faith is the gift of God's grace and a man's righteousness is the fruit of God's grace<sup>743</sup>. By the time Augustine came to dictate the later sections of *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, from September 419 on, a passionate and brilliant defender of Pelagianism had arisen in the form of Julian of Eclanum. Along with seventeen other Italian bishops he had refused to sign the orthodox position set out by Pope Zosimus after the Council of Carthage (417/8). Exiled to the East and then to Sicily, Julian proved a fierce and accomplished adversary during the remainder of Augustine's episcopacy. Sadly, none of Julian's works are extant.

27 In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 80-86, Augustine still refrains from mentioning Pelagianism or any its proponents by name but he does address all their major disagreements through his analysis of the vine and branches Christ and his disciples are. "This passage of the Gospel," begins Augustine, "declares in so many words that the Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, is the head of the Church, and that we are his members"<sup>744</sup>. Immediately reinforcing his view that Christ is mediator in his manhood<sup>745</sup>, Augustine says that since God the Word was of a

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<sup>741</sup> see *Io.ev.tr.* 13.11-18

<sup>742</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 14.5

<sup>743</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 27.7, 49.8

<sup>744</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 80.1

<sup>745</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 82.4, *civ.* 9.15

different nature to man, he took on flesh that he may become the vine wherein men may be engrafted as branches<sup>746</sup>. By virtue of his divinity, Christ, like the Father, acts as an interior husbandman by supplying growth from within; in virtue of his humanity, he acts as an exterior husbandman who prunes through preaching. According to Augustine, inner cleansing is necessary if Christians are to bear fruit and outer purging is necessary if they are to bear still more fruit. In co-operating with Christ, men are made branches of the vine and further his work “but not of themselves: ‘For without me,’ Christ says, ‘you can do nothing’”<sup>747</sup>. This is the crux of the debate with Pelagians for Augustine. It addresses the fundamental orientation of man’s will: “‘As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in me.’ A great encomium on grace, my brethren- one that will instruct the hearts of the humble, and stop the mouths of the proud”<sup>748</sup>.

28 Augustine immediately unleashes an attack on what he regards as the blinding inconsistency of the self-righteous and self-complacent. By acclaiming God as their creator but themselves as the source of good works, they deceive themselves and undermine free will instead of establishing it<sup>749</sup>. As Clark explains most clearly, the positive side of this argument was maintained consistently by Augustine through to his *Retractationes*: “grace does not eliminate free will but increases its freedom by promoting, although never compelling, the choice of the good”<sup>750</sup>. While Pelagius interpreted ‘grace’ as the *knowledge* given by Christ on how to live correctly and the *free will* given by God as the capacity to do it, Augustine interpreted the Pauline term as a divine empowerment to do the right thing: grace is added to man’s free choice (which as an inalienable human capacity was not lost after Adam’s sin) to produce a will which, while retaining the free choice to accept or reject God’s ways, can now do good spontaneously and with pleasure or delight. This freedom (*libertas*)<sup>751</sup>, according to Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, is enjoyed by the servant who has become a friend by doing out of love what his Master commands. Still, man is enabled both to know and to do God’s will only because of Christ<sup>752</sup>. Christ does this through

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<sup>746</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 80.1

<sup>747</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 80.2

<sup>748</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 81.2

<sup>749</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 81.2

<sup>750</sup> *Retr.* 1.22 in Clark 1 p.45-6

<sup>751</sup> Clark 1 p.45-6, 48-9

<sup>752</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 85.1-3

the outer and inner husbandry he carries on now through his members, the Church. Just as Christ the mediator “is priest and sacrifice, and priest because he is sacrifice”<sup>753</sup>, so Christians who continue his mediation are both friends and servants, and friends because servants.

29 Augustine contends that just as the vine gives life to the branches and enables them to bear fruit, so, firstly, the faith which justifies man is imparted by God and, secondly, the love faith works through to produce good works is that with which Christ as mediator loves man. For Augustine then, God, not man, is to be glorified for man’s good works because they are the products of God’s graces rather than of man’s merits; and man loves God only because God loved man first<sup>754</sup>. In Augustine’s opinion, the love with which Christ loves man is what enables man to keep Christ’s commandments and while the humble recognise such grace, the proud do not<sup>755</sup>. The reason why Christ helps man obey is the same as why he cleanses man, namely, so Christ and man may have fellowship with one another, for in such unity lies the joy of each<sup>756</sup>.

30 Thus led into the realms of divine foreknowledge and predestination, Augustine immediately states that as God, Christ’s joy is perfect from all eternity and is unchanging. Since this joy cannot be increased or decreased by making men or saving them, Christ must have foreknown and foreordained those he was to create and redeem. Christ’s joy begins to be in a man when he is called and regenerated in faith and love; it is brought to completion in eternity<sup>757</sup>.

31 For Augustine, Christ’s declaration that, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit”<sup>758</sup> confirms that it is the ineffable grace of God which enables man both to believe in Christ and to do the good he commands. Hence, in opposition to those (the Pelagians) who argue that God chose certain men because he foreknew they would be good while at the same time denying that grace had any part to play in the matter, Augustine states that God foreknew not only the good men would do but also the divine grace with which they would co-

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<sup>753</sup> *conf.* 10.42.69

<sup>754</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 82.1-2

<sup>755</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 82.3

<sup>756</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 84.1

<sup>757</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 84.1

operate in order to do good. After all, if men are chosen on their merits, “grace is no more grace”<sup>759</sup>. As Augustine sees no opposition either between divine grace and human free will or between divine grace and divine foreknowledge, he conceives of no opposition between human free will and divine foreknowledge. In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* therefore, Augustine suggests the free choice facing man is clear-growth in Christ the vine or extinction in the fire of damnation<sup>760</sup>.

32 Having opened *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 80-86 with reference to Christ the Mediator<sup>761</sup> and gone on to explain that Christ, firstly, had to be man in order to be the true vine for man and, secondly, had to be God in order to supply divine grace<sup>762</sup>, Augustine concludes the section by discussing the vine and branches of Christ in terms of the way, the truth and the life of Christ the Mediator. “He Himself is our fruit... and He Himself is the way wherein we go.” Presently kept in the way of the vine by the longing desire of humble love, man will enjoy the full fruits of truth and life in eternity. This way of grace, Augustine reassures, is one that can be trusted: provided man stays rooted in the vine Christ is, man will ask for and will be granted only that which pertains to salvation<sup>763</sup>.

33 In the course of *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 80-86, Augustine does not shy away from Pelagian concerns against inherited guilt and for autonomous perfection. Regarding the former, he stresses the ‘reverse side’ of original sin, incorporation into the body of Christ<sup>764</sup>, by saying it is through the faith of the Church, Christ’s members, that infants are baptised and so engrafted into the one true vine<sup>765</sup>. With respect to the latter, he points out that while martyrs demonstrate great love by laying down their lives, their sins are forgiven through Christ’s blood, not their own, because only Christ, who alone was free from all original and personal sin, possessed perfectly innocent blood<sup>766</sup>.

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<sup>758</sup> Jn. 15.16

<sup>759</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 86.2, Rom. 11:5, 6

<sup>760</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 81.3

<sup>761</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 80.1

<sup>762</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 81.3

<sup>763</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 86.3; cf. Chapter 3.48-51

<sup>764</sup> see Chapter 2.23

<sup>765</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 80.3

<sup>766</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 84.2

34 In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 80-86, Augustine observes that Christ's assertion to his disciples that, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you"<sup>767</sup>, indicates the grace that is Christ's as Mediator<sup>768</sup>. The "substantial and consubstantial love" of the Father and Son, explains Augustine later in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, is the Holy Spirit<sup>769</sup>. Christ proved he loved men with this very love by sending them the same Holy Spirit, who pours into men's hearts the love of God<sup>770</sup>. Romans 5:5, claims Burnaby, "remained for [Augustine] the most conclusive scriptural refutation of Pelagianism"<sup>771</sup>. He cites the Pauline text continually and takes it to refer not "to the love wherewith God loves us, but that by which he makes us his lovers"<sup>772</sup>. Julian's heresy was "to place *gratia Christi* in His example and not in his gift; to seek righteousness by the imitation of Christ instead of through the Holy Spirit which leads men to that imitation"<sup>773</sup>. According to Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 98, Peter's transformation from denier to martyr was wrought by the advent of the Holy Spirit and is proof positive that "it would have been little purpose [for Christ] to have exhorted [his disciples] by his example, had he not also filled them with His Spirit"<sup>774</sup>.

35 Through the love imparted by the Holy Spirit, the true but "somewhat sharp and bitter medicines" with which Christ the Mediator heals man- bear with one another, endure persecution, nurture patience and continence<sup>775</sup>- become sweet because, as Augustine explains in *De civitate dei*, righteousness delights only with the help of God's grace<sup>776</sup>. Believers are "justified, then, not by the law, nor by their own will, but 'freely by his grace': not that the justification is without our will, but the weakness of our will is discovered by the law, so that grace may restore the will and the restored will may fulfil the law, [and be] established neither under the law or in need of the law"<sup>777</sup>.

36 Bourke suggests that Augustine stressed such forthright views on grace being a prerequisite for meritorious actions most vigorously during the Pelagian controversy but

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<sup>767</sup> Jn. 15:8

<sup>768</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 82.2, 4

<sup>769</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 105.3

<sup>770</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 102.5

<sup>771</sup> Burnaby ed. p.198 note 7

<sup>772</sup> Burnaby p.100

<sup>773</sup> Burnaby p.171-2

<sup>774</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 98.1

<sup>775</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 3.14

<sup>776</sup> *civ.* 13.5

<sup>777</sup> *spir.et.litt.* 15.9



held them from at least as early as AD 396/7<sup>778</sup>. Markus would seem to agree, noting as he does that “[Augustine’s] re-reading of Saint Paul in the mid-390’s... marks the end of his belief in human self-determinism and the beginning of the theology of grace he would use against Pelagius”<sup>779</sup>. The presentation of the mature form of this theology made by Augustine a quarter of a century later in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 80-86 is measured and engaging. While his refutations of Pelagian thought are clear and firm, they are neither bitter nor vindictive. The image of the vine not only clarifies Augustine’s thought and makes it very accessible to the hearer, but anchors it deep in Scripture. The fact that he is able to tie all this into the centrepiece of his entire moral and ethical thought, the man Christ Jesus, the one mediator between God and men, is simply a masterstroke.

## CONCLUSION

37 There is, according to Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, perfect unity in the Trinity because theirs is perfect love<sup>780</sup>. Charity makes for unity because in Charity there is no sin, the cause of all division. God is One because God is Holy. Christians who “think the same and love another,” continues Augustine, also become united<sup>781</sup>. Sadly, the reality of sin means that the holiness, and consequently the oneness, of the Church is presently imperfect. Throughout *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* therefore, Augustine calls on Christians to observe a spiritual Sabbath- to abstain from the servile work of sin<sup>782</sup>. By rooting themselves in the true vine of Christ, all the prayers and works of Christians will be guided away from sin and towards the eternal salvation of all<sup>783</sup>. This is the life of faith working through love<sup>784</sup>.

38 When analysing the Lord’s Prayer in his letter to Proba, Augustine states that the words of prayers are symbols of reality which serve to rouse desire and provide a benchmark for progress<sup>785</sup>. One yardstick Augustine stresses in particular is the need for man to forgive his neighbour as each man as been forgiven by God. In *In epistulam*

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<sup>778</sup> Bourke p.113-114

<sup>779</sup> Markus 1 p 22; see Introduction 30-32

<sup>780</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 18.4

<sup>781</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 14.9, Acts 4.32

<sup>782</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 3.19, 20.2, 30.4-6, 44.9

<sup>783</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 86.1-3

<sup>784</sup> Gal. 5:6

<sup>785</sup> *ep.* 8.5.17-8.9.18

*Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* and *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, he says the love that bears a brother's burdens for the sake of unity finds its perfection in the love of enemies which desires that they too may become one with Christ and his Church<sup>786</sup>. By helping to remove sin and division within and between Christians, charity makes the Church Holy and thereby One; by going out to make all one in Christ, charity helps the Church be Apostolic and Catholic. This is the charity of the true vine<sup>787</sup>. For Augustine then, Christian charity *begins* at home with the mutual love and forgiveness of all those in the Church, but it does not *end* there. By undertaking the personal and communal call to sanctity and unity, Christians become a clearer light to the world and so are better able to continue the universal mission entrusted to the first disciples<sup>788</sup>.

39 Divisions within the Church pained Augustine. Yet as with the protagonists in many controversies, the majority of things Augustine said or did, were or have been interpreted by his contemporaries and later commentators, as too little by hard-liners and as too much by libertarians<sup>789</sup>. To Augustine's credit though, when dealing with the two most difficult problems of his episcopacy in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, he founded and expounded his 'Love, and do what you will' precept on two of the most enduring images of the Church presented in Scripture. As has been seen with respect to Pelagianism, by utilising Christ's analogy of himself and his members as a vine and its branches, Augustine emphasised how and why the life of the Church must stem from the life of Christ. This life of grace consists in the love with which Christ loves men as their only mediator with God. Such love is the source of man's own good works and seeks the salvation of all<sup>790</sup>. This clearly is "the root of love" Augustine had in mind when forwarding his precept of *disciplina* a decade earlier in *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, for "of this root can nothing spring but what is good"<sup>791</sup>.

40 In *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, Augustine uses the idea of the Vine planted in Jerusalem and spread to all nations as an argument in support of the Catholic church, which spreads the Gospel "over the whole earth," as against the

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<sup>786</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 1.12, 9

<sup>787</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 82.1-4

<sup>788</sup> Mt. 28:18-20

<sup>789</sup> as testified to by present disputes in the Middle East, Northern Ireland or former Yugoslavia

<sup>790</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 82.2-4, 83.2-3.

Donatists, whose missionary endeavours are confined to Africa alone<sup>792</sup>. Augustine is led into the theme of the universal Vine by discussion of the liturgy as “the Church’s nuptials... in the Church they that come as guests, if they come to good purpose, become the bride. For all the Church is Christ’s Bride, of which the beginning and first fruits is the flesh of Christ; there was the Bride joined to the Bridegroom in the flesh”<sup>793</sup>. Later, in *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, after proposing his disciplinary precept, Augustine concludes his analysis of the two contrasting ‘fears’ spoken of in Scripture by explaining how the chaste fear of a true bride which longs for her groom to return and remain should “have place in the mind of Christians”<sup>794</sup>.

41 That Augustine holds the chaste fear of true love to spring from humility is evident from the early sections of *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*. Therein, he compares the Donatists to the man who was thrown out of the wedding feast- by failing to proclaim Christ to all nations, they show they prefer their own garments to Christ’s<sup>795</sup>. Just as the temple traders and Simon Magus in the time of Christ and the apostles, so Primianus, Maximianus, Rogatus and others in and around Carthage, Mauritania and Numidia during Augustine’s day, proudly “seek their own in the Church, not the things which are Christ’s”<sup>796</sup>. Since “to love any person in place of Christ is adultery,”<sup>797</sup> Augustine holds up the examples of John the Baptist and Paul who were jealous for Christ and his Church rather than for themselves because each stood on the solid ground of humility. By pointing out how he, like the rest of mankind, stood in need of Christ’s baptism and enlightenment, John proved himself a friend of the Bridegroom. Paul did the same by working to preserve the Church’s virginity of mind against the wiles of the devil. In this context, of being a true friend of the Bridegroom, Augustine defends his own actions regarding the Donatists by way of an analogy he believes all human hearts will be able to understand. What sort of friend is he who, having been entrusted with the care of a man’s wife while that man is away on a journey, either seeks to seduce the woman himself, allows others to do so or fails to sanction the woman herself if she acts inappropriately. In like manner, to be a friend of

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<sup>791</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 7.8

<sup>792</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 2.2-3

<sup>793</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 2.2

<sup>794</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 9.6-8

<sup>795</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 9.13

<sup>796</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 10.6

<sup>797</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 13.10

Christ, Augustine, as bishop and successor of the apostle Paul, must safeguard his own congregation's virginity of mind by preaching universally, "Entire faith, firm hope, sincere charity"<sup>798</sup>.

42 Augustine was well aware that there were many inside the Church, as well as outside it, who abused it for their own purposes and received her sacraments unworthily but, unlike the Donatists, "the great teacher of predestination never in pastoral practice despaired of any man, for God's judgements are unsearchable"<sup>799</sup>. Sad and damaging as individual and institutional imperfections are, they must not deflect the Church from pursuing her mission. To be One and Holy, says Augustine, the Church must bear all its members' burdens by forgiving the penitent, explaining the truth lovingly to the errant and, when justice demands, expelling the stubbornly malicious, for the body is relieved when a bad humour is vomited forth<sup>800</sup>. To be Catholic and Apostolic, Christians must not be slothful to preach in word and deed the healing and enlightenment they themselves have received from Christ, while at the same time being sensitive to the different cultural practices (such as, burial rites) of different nations<sup>801</sup>. In all her prayer and work, the Church relies not on the merits of her members but on the grace and truth of Christ Jesus, the one mediator between God and men. In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, Augustine claims that the fullness of Christ's grace and truth is retained in the Catholic Church because it has maintained a line of unbroken succession with the first apostles<sup>802</sup>. All the diverse gifts the Church needs to fulfil its vocation to be One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic are granted and guaranteed her by the Holy Spirit provided, cautions Augustine, the Church maintains unity<sup>803</sup>.

43 Augustine appealed to the uniqueness of the one Church, the 'Catholica' of which, he believed, would be recognised by even rival sects<sup>804</sup>. Ultimately the universality of the Church is rooted in the universal love of God. Since the charity of God knows no bounds, argues Augustine in *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, the Church has no right to straiten it either by refusing to love neighbour or by failing to

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<sup>798</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 13.10-13

<sup>799</sup> Bonner 2 VI p.453

<sup>800</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 7.3, *conf.* 5.5.9, *ep.Io.tr.* 3.4

<sup>801</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 17.11-12, 120.5

<sup>802</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 121.4, 26.4, 37.6

<sup>803</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 32.6-9, 19.11-12

<sup>804</sup> Chadwick p.53

preach the gospel and the remission of sins universally<sup>805</sup>. Aided and abetted by the simplicity and fervour of the Holy Spirit, all Christians are called upon to pray and use their talents in seeking the lost<sup>806</sup>. Even when faced with what he himself considers to be the trenchant obstinacy of schismatics like the Donatists, Augustine demands his Catholic congregation persevere with the simplicity and fervour of the dove they claim to be under: "There must be no despairing; pray, preach, love... Christ will aid"<sup>807</sup>. Similarly, as Donatism faded and Pelagianism strengthened, Augustine reminds his listeners that if they should fail to acknowledge that any justice or righteousness they have is the fruit of God's grace, Christians, like the ungrateful philosophers, will lose whatever truth and virtue they possess<sup>808</sup>. In championing the priority of divine grace and man's need to be thankful for it, Augustine reasserts the centrality of Eucharist to Christian living: "All our thinking is attuned to the Eucharist and the Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking"<sup>809</sup>.

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<sup>805</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 10.6, 8-10

<sup>806</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 6.3, 7.21, 10.9

<sup>807</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 6.24

<sup>808</sup> *civ.* 7.4, *Io.ev.tr.* 14.13

<sup>809</sup> Irenaeus *Adversus haereses* 4.8.15

# CHAPTER 5: THE WORLD

## INTRODUCTION

1 Commissioned by Christ to continue his work of mediation, the Church has both the right and the responsibility for bringing the grace and truth of the incarnate Word to fallen man. While Christ's entire ministry provides a blueprint for how Christians are to undertake their mission, Augustine takes Christ's approach to the woman at the well as providing a particularly good model for how Christians are to approach the world outside the Church. Just as the Samaritan woman was wearied with coming to draw water which provides but temporary satisfaction, so, states Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, those who dispatch their lust in pursuit of worldly pleasures find but passing relief. In contrast, Christ thirsts for the woman's faith, the faith that leads to the truth on which the joy of lasting happiness is based<sup>810</sup>. He speaks to her guardedly and teaches her gradually through "the gift of God [which] is the Holy Spirit." By doing all this out of compassion for the heavily burdened woman, Christ, in terms of Augustine's allegory, demonstrates his love for man and his wish that man would learn to be humble and lowly of heart<sup>811</sup>. In order to bring to the world fruitfully the grace and truth of Christ with which she has been entrusted, the Church must imitate her Master's gentle humility and compassionate love.

2 To free fallen man from his servitude to sin, Christians, stipulates Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, must learn to judge according to divine righteousness, not human appearances. Christians therefore must seek to grow in the knowledge and love of God who created all men, since only the man who loves all equally can judge each correctly<sup>812</sup>. Even then, warns Augustine, man "cannot search into the consciences of [other] men." Therefore Christians are to reserve their judgement in distinguishing genuine love of God from corrupt worldly lusts and to pursue the former while shunning the latter. By learning to live according to the truth the Spirit gives them to understand, Christians will learn how both to love the sinner while hating the sin and to leave "all definite and fixed opinions... until the Lord comes"<sup>813</sup>. Through such

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<sup>810</sup> *conf.* 10.23.33

<sup>811</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 15.9-19

<sup>812</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 30.6-8

<sup>813</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 90:2-3, 30.7

witness, maintains Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, the world will progress to eternal life by coming to know the Father as the one true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent<sup>814</sup>.

3 In turning away from unity in God, fallen man, declares Augustine in *Confessiones*, is lost in multiplicity<sup>815</sup>. To analyse man's fragmentation because of sin Augustine made use of the three lusts of the world identified by John<sup>816</sup>. Though these lusts of the world can be distinguished from each other, one often entails or leads on to another<sup>817</sup>. Augustine describes how the man who glories in himself descends into idolatry<sup>818</sup> and how the man who indulges his curiosity at the theatre can be moved to similar acts of torture and infidelity<sup>819</sup>. According to Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, those lost in sensuality, curiosity or worldly ambition are to be sought for their own good<sup>820</sup>.

## SENSUALITY

4 In the opening homilies of *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, Augustine makes it clear that man's spirit is to rule his flesh and that man is to take greater delight in inner beauty than outer beauty- a just old man is to be cherished more than a young thief<sup>821</sup>. While such themes certainly recur in both the remainder of *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and the whole of *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, in neither work is there any tendency to dwell on the lusts of the flesh. When addressing carnal pleasures directly in *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* for example, Augustine simply cautions man against indulging his eating, drinking and sexual practices: "let there be measure, because of the Creator, that these things may not bind you by your loving them: lest you love that for enjoyment, which you ought to have for use"<sup>822</sup>.

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<sup>814</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 105.3, Jn. 17:3

<sup>815</sup> *conf.* 2.1.1

<sup>816</sup> *conf.* 10.31.44-10.39.64

<sup>817</sup> see Chapter 2.32, *conf.* 3.8.16

<sup>818</sup> *spir.et.litt.* 18.11

<sup>819</sup> *conf.* 3.2.2; in today's world, the relationship of crime and violent/sexual films and television programmes is often debated

<sup>820</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 7.21

<sup>821</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 2.14, 3.21

<sup>822</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 2.12

5 As for the difficult matter of how much sensual delight is lawful, Augustine notes in *Confessiones* how man often rejoices in his ignorance: delighted not to be clear how much food and drink is necessary for the body's well-being, men indulge their pleasure on the pretext of maintaining health<sup>823</sup>. Augustine felt it to be part of the Christian vocation to help define the limits of sensual delights by word and, most critically, by example. In *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* therefore, he berates those Christians who attempt to mask their drunkenness under the countenance of celebrating liturgical feasts<sup>824</sup>.

6 In *De civitate dei*, Augustine marvels at how the parts of the human body are so perfectly shaped to help the soul "that one would be at a loss to say whether utility or beauty is the major consideration in the their creation"<sup>825</sup> and adds that all physical deformity and ugliness will be removed in the next life<sup>826</sup>. In this life, all people, whatever their physical or mental abnormalities, are to be treated equally as creatures made in the image and likeness of God<sup>827</sup> and since the body is no mere adornment but part of man's very nature it must be treated respectfully after death<sup>828</sup>. As for miscarriages and abortions, Augustine says it is difficult to determine when an infant begins to live in the womb but if the foetus has died it must be a candidate for resurrection<sup>829</sup>. For Augustine, the intrinsic goodness of human life in all its forms means Christians are obliged to care for the body and soul of their neighbour and their enemy as well as their own from womb to tomb. Such care is to characterise Christian family life and amongst other things, according to Augustine's interpretation of the dying Christ's committal of Mary to John in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, it means "care for their parents ought to be of concern to pious children"<sup>830</sup>.

7 Care costs. In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* therefore, Augustine readily acknowledges and explains the Church's need for money: both the actions of Christ and the words of Paul demand "that the doing of what is right should not be held in

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<sup>823</sup> *conf.* 10.31.44

<sup>824</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 4.4

<sup>825</sup> *civ.* 22.24

<sup>826</sup> *civ.* 22.19

<sup>827</sup> *civ.* 16.8

<sup>828</sup> *civ.* 1.13

<sup>829</sup> *ench.* 86, *civ.* 22.13

<sup>830</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 119.2; an important consideration for societies like those in the contemporary West with an ageing generation



abeyance through the fear of want”<sup>831</sup>. Since such corporeal works of mercy and justice both reflect the goodness of the human body and reveal Christian love to the world, Augustine denounces any person who hinders the Church’s work in such areas: “He who thieves from the Church, stands side by side with the castaway Judas”<sup>832</sup>. Similarly, lest any clerics began to take their keep for granted, Augustine reminds his clergy that they, like the first disciples, must be prepared to do whatever is necessary for their sustenance<sup>833</sup>.

8 While Christians are to be tireless in their care of those disadvantaged in any way, Augustine tells his congregation that they are not to wish anyone to be poor just so they can practice compassion<sup>834</sup>. Rather, as he explains in *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, Christians are to wish everybody to be equal<sup>835</sup>. Of course, when Christians lack the physical means to help they can always give love<sup>836</sup>. Indeed, notes Augustine in *De fide spe et caritate*, while feeding the hungry, clothing the destitute and visiting the sick and imprisoned are necessary to enter the kingdom of God they are not by themselves sufficient: “The greatest of all alms is to forgive our debtors and to love our enemies”<sup>837</sup>.

9 Underpinning all Augustine’s teaching in the area of sensuality is his conviction that since God has made everything good<sup>838</sup> man can use everything that exists, including his own body, for the glory of God. Augustine not only declares that there are lawful sensual delights but insists that in denying them man insults his Creator. Man is right to pray for sufficiency, health and friendship<sup>839</sup>. In *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, Augustine rejoices that everything the Lord has made gives praise to the Lord<sup>840</sup> but counsels man against loving the things in the world without reference to their Creator- creation is indeed God’s engagement ring but it would be abhorrent for the bride to discard her groom for the ring<sup>841</sup>. By, on the one hand, measuring their

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<sup>831</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 62.5

<sup>832</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 52.10

<sup>833</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 122.3

<sup>834</sup> *en.Ps.* 125.14

<sup>835</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 8.8

<sup>836</sup> *en.Ps.* 121.10

<sup>837</sup> *ench.* 70-73

<sup>838</sup> see Chapter 2.4, 8

<sup>839</sup> *serm.* 159.2, *ep.* 258.2 and *ep.* 130.12f in Burnaby p.113

<sup>840</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 3.9, Dan. 3:29-68

<sup>841</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 2.11

participation in carnal pleasures and, on the other, tending the poor, weak and lame of any description, Christians demonstrate how the physical world is to be delighted in and cared for. Through such witness, the Church reaches out compassionately to those lost in the whirlpool of wanton hedonism<sup>842</sup> and upbraids those individuals and communities who ignore the sufferings of others.

## CURIOSITY

10 Since happiness is to be found in God alone, Augustine reasons that knowledge of God is to be valued over any other type of knowledge<sup>843</sup>. He values “anything that breeds, feeds, defends and strengthens the saving faith which leads to true happiness” but rejects many realms of human knowledge as “a great deal of superfluous frivolity and pernicious curiosity”<sup>844</sup>. This includes individuals who are inquisitive about other people’s lives but negligent to correct their own; scientists who pursue knowledge for its own sake; and academics and attorneys who are often more concerned with winning their arguments than with promoting truth and justice<sup>845</sup>. In *Confessiones*, Augustine also dismisses many businesses and public shows as the amusements and games of adults (noting that children who indulged in similar activities would be punished)<sup>846</sup>. All these things are part and parcel of the lust of curiosity Augustine identifies in *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*. Like the selfish desire to perform miracles, all such things put God to the test<sup>847</sup>. All such tests prove is man’s lack of faith in God and his commands.

11 As with Abraham, man’s faith is proved by testing whether he is prepared to obey God’s commands or not<sup>848</sup>. In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, Augustine cites two reasons for men not showing faithful obedience to God: the stubbornness of man’s will and the withholding of divine grace. Augustine defends the latter action of God as righteous, even if unsearchable, and in no way denying the freedom of man’s will. By praying ‘not to be led into temptation’, the Christian recognises that he can neither

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<sup>842</sup> as Augustine had been- see Chapter 3.1

<sup>843</sup> *conf.* 5.4.7

<sup>844</sup> *trin.* 14.1.3

<sup>845</sup> *conf.* 10.3.3, 10.35.55, 5.6.10- such curiosity is reflected in the contemporary world by the large ‘gossip’ sections of the modern media; accounts to a large extent for the ever-growing field of ‘medical ethics’; and prompts anxieties over whether politics is ‘more style than substance’

<sup>846</sup> *conf.* 1.9.15, 1.10.16

<sup>847</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 2.12

overcome temptation by the power of his own will, nor shirk his responsibility for trying to live by saying that the power to do so lies in the hand of God. Augustine declares that the man who thanks God for divine assistance and prays that his own human strength may not fail possesses the faith which works through love<sup>849</sup>. Through this faith which is willing to endure anything for Christ's sake<sup>850</sup>, Christians are led to Truth, find joy in the Truth and share that joy with the world<sup>851</sup>.

12 In the battle for hearts and minds, the field of faith and reason, Augustine sees many false standard-bearers. In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* 45 he describes, firstly, how rejection of Christ has led Pharisees and philosophers into error and, secondly, how failure to recognise Christ as "both man and God" has led Sabellius, Arius and Photius into heresy. Augustine determines the common cause of all these strayings from the Truth to be the desire of the individuals concerned to seek their own glory rather than Christ's. In attempting to seduce others to their own particular ways and sects, proud Pharisees and philosophers reveal their envy of those liberated by the Truth of Christ. Heretics too manifest the same downward spiral of intellectual pride, envy and division<sup>852</sup>. In contrast, argues Augustine later in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, authentic Christianity is characterised by the humility, love and unity proclaimed by and revealed in Christ Jesus himself<sup>853</sup>. As Christ did this publicly, so must the Church.

13 In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* therefore, Augustine warns those who are seeking to penetrate the mysteries of Christ and his Church to be wary of the lure of 'secret' revelation. Deliberately misinterpreting Christ, many "who wish to be styled Christians" claim to have come into knowledge of the things the disciples were unable to bear. Through such esoteric teachers, the curious are led into all sorts of magical arts and occult practices<sup>854</sup>. In contrast, points out Augustine in this portion of *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, the Church sets forth her teaching openly and demands her

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<sup>848</sup> Gen. 22.1-14

<sup>849</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 53.6, 8

<sup>850</sup> Rom. 8:35

<sup>851</sup> Given some of Augustine's views on original sin and predestination, some may doubt how 'joyful' a person Augustine himself was but Bourke (p.24, 81) for one suggests the Augustine "was a very cheerful person" and had joy associated with him, by Lombard, Bonaventure, Aquinas and Duns Scotus

<sup>852</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 45.2-5.

<sup>853</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 51.3

<sup>854</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 97.2-4

members bear it ever in mind. While feasting as far as possible on the meat of Christ's divinity, Christians, new, or well-advanced, in the faith are never to withdraw from mother Church's copious supply of milk- the Lord's prayer, the Creed, doctrinal teaching. Without this nourishment their faith lacks understanding- they are able to believe but unable to distinguish good from evil<sup>855</sup>. By discerning and living accordingly, Christians witness to God's kingdom of truth and virtue for the good of the world<sup>856</sup>. The Church cannot control whether the world accepts or rejects her life and witness but for the sake of Christians and non-Christians alike all the teachings and practices of the Church are kept open to public scrutiny.

14 As for those who champion science in order to deride the humble faith of the young<sup>857</sup>, Augustine, in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, retorts that it was for the very reason of breaking the stiff necks of proud intellectuals that uneducated fisherman were chosen by Christ as his first disciples<sup>858</sup>. Augustine fears curiosity and idolatry await all those who fail to thank God for the wisdom and knowledge they possess because their misguided love of reason scorns the starting point of true religion: faith in the humble Christ Jesus in whom are hidden *all* the riches of wisdom and knowledge<sup>859</sup>. As the way, the Truth and the Life are inseparable in Christ, "what is decisive is the attitude towards the *Via Humilitas*"<sup>860</sup>.

15 So it is in a spirit of humble and open dialogue that the Church approaches the world of faith and reason. Conscious that there is only one Teacher, Christ<sup>861</sup>, the Church recognises any knowledge and wisdom she has is his gift and realises the conversion of any man to Christianity will similarly be the product of Christ's grace. While proclaiming the Truth as she understands it, the Church remains open to the insights of the men of every age and nation, mindful that wherever truth is discovered it is the Lord's<sup>862</sup>.

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<sup>855</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 98.5-6

<sup>856</sup> *civ.* 4.3

<sup>857</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 97.2-4

<sup>858</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 17.7

<sup>859</sup> *trin.* 1.1.1, 13, *conf.* 7.20.26

<sup>860</sup> Madec p.48

<sup>861</sup> *mag.* 14.45, Mt. 23:9

## WORLDLY AMBITION

16 Being made in the image of God, man, declares Augustine, has a natural power or dominion over the non-rational parts of creation. When living within the divinely ordained limits of his power, man acts justly and gives glory to God. When proudly going beyond his appointed bounds and avariciously grasping more than what suffices, man is lead into all forms of sin; including, most grievously, the lust for worldly ambition<sup>863</sup>. By making this sort of domination an end itself, the mind, in Augustine's opinion, begins to use all things, especially the body and the imagination, to indulge its spiritual fornication<sup>864</sup>.

17 Even more sinister is the tendency of a man's inflated sense of his own power to use all people in the world for his good rather than God's. "Not that power is to be shunned as something bad, but that the right order must be preserved which puts justice first"<sup>865</sup>. The witty and truthful rejoinder made by a captured pirate to Alexander the Great confirms Augustine's view that all men recognise the need for justice even if they disagree on what constitutes it- for while kingdoms without justice are nothing but criminal gangs on a large scale, the agreed conventions of criminal gangs make them petty kingdoms<sup>866</sup>. Yet unless man serves the justice of the true God, continues Augustine in *De civitate dei*, he cannot command himself let alone anyone else with justice<sup>867</sup>. At home or work, those who rule in accord with divine justice bring about true peace because they "do not give orders because of a lust for domination but from a dutiful concern for the interests of others"<sup>868</sup>.

18 The world does not know the peace of Christ<sup>869</sup> because it does not know his justice. His justice of humility<sup>870</sup> is alien to the city of this world which aims at domination<sup>871</sup>. For Augustine then, Christian justice is not simply a matter of liberty, equality and fraternity among men, but the restoration of fallen man's relationship with

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<sup>862</sup> see *doctr.chr.* 2.18.28

<sup>863</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 8.6, 2.13

<sup>864</sup> Gilson p.119-120

<sup>865</sup> *trin.* 13.4.17

<sup>866</sup> *civ.* 4.4

<sup>867</sup> *civ.* 19.21

<sup>868</sup> *civ.* 19.14

<sup>869</sup> *Jn.* 14.27

<sup>870</sup> *trin.* 13.4.18

<sup>871</sup> *civ.* 1.Preface

God. The former is possible only in and through the latter. So while, on the one hand, Christians must be actively involved in politics concerning the just distribution of wealth and power, on the other hand, their motivation and aim is not to establish a secular utopia but to spread the kingdom of God.

19 In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, Augustine describes the pride which seeks to use all things and people for its own private gratification in various terms of self-glorification, self-praise and not submitting to God's righteousness<sup>872</sup>. From this love of self arises the city of this world, a city which lives according to the standard of the flesh; holds God in contempt and itself in glory; and is dominated by its own very lust for domination. Until the end of time it is mixed with the city of God, a city which is founded on the humility of Christ, loves God in Christ rather than itself and lives according to the Spirit<sup>873</sup>. The love of God which builds up this latter city, explains Augustine in *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, cannot coexist with the love of world. If man fails to uproot the love of the world from his heart, it will grow with and choke the love of God<sup>874</sup>. Ultimately therefore the war waged between pride and humility in every man is fought on behalf of the whole community. Augustine argues that whereas pride's love of private goods descends into lawsuits, enmity, murder and other such evils<sup>875</sup>, humility opens up man to love God, his friend in God and his enemy because of God<sup>876</sup>. The beauty of humility is that it leads, firstly, to a unity of person by giving rise to the obedience which guards all other virtues<sup>877</sup> and, secondly, to a unity of persons by making many hearts and minds one in love of God and each other<sup>878</sup>.

20 Markus and Torchia each note how Augustine increasingly refined his understanding of pride from a defective movement from God to self to an increasing desire to turn from the common good to one's own private good<sup>879</sup>. The antidote for existing in, by and for oneself alone is the fellowship secured by giving and receiving relationships<sup>880</sup>. This, argues Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, is not

<sup>872</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 29.8, 58.8, 53.9

<sup>873</sup> *civ.* 1.Preface, 14.12, 14.28, 18.54, 22.22

<sup>874</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 2.8-9

<sup>875</sup> *en.Ps.* 131.5

<sup>876</sup> *conf.* 6.9.14

<sup>877</sup> *civ.* 14.12-13

<sup>878</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 14.9, Acts. 4:32

<sup>879</sup> Markus 2 p.248f in Schnaubelt et al eds., Torchia p.270f in Leinhard et al eds.

<sup>880</sup> *Div.qu.Simp.* 1.2.16 in Markus 2 p.250 in Schnaubelt et al eds., cf. Brown p.328

possible in a world which does not love God. By choosing to love itself rather than God, the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit without whom “we can neither love Christ nor keep his commandments”<sup>881</sup>. For Augustine, each man follows either the love of God to salvation or the love of the world to damnation<sup>882</sup> and each man’s course is dictated by his humble acceptance or proud rejection of the one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus<sup>883</sup>.

21 For Augustine of course, the saddest aspect of worldly ambition is its sheer lack of ambition. Its desires are wholly temporal, not eternal, and its finite goods makes equal sharing difficult if not impossible<sup>884</sup>. Conversely, explains Augustine in *De trinitate* and *De civitate dei*, man’s truly greatest good, God, is infinite and all can partake of him eternally without him suffering any diminution whatsoever. Hence, to turn away from God is to turn to something less: by seeking more than the whole, the proud man receives less and becomes less<sup>885</sup>. Such perversity is readily evident to Augustine in the everyday example of the rich and powerful who live in constant anxiety of losing what their greed has amassed<sup>886</sup>. Even the joys of earthly empires are outweighed by the bloody necessities of self-defence and the fear that everything could be lost in a moment<sup>887</sup>. For Augustine, the enticements of secular power and prosperity do not compare with the pleasures of living in unity under God. Yet if Christians are to convince the world of this, they themselves are to abstain from the love of self and private possessions, “make a place for the Lord,” and rejoice in shared faith, active charity and common goods<sup>888</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

22 Augustine is convinced that men should counsel one another unto eternal, not temporal, ends because earthly dominions and riches are but dreams which disappear when waking in eternity<sup>889</sup>. Yet without the *hope* of eternal life, man slides quickly into pursuing the lusts of the world. Like a tree planted beside flowing waters, declares

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<sup>881</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 74.2, 4

<sup>882</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 7.1

<sup>883</sup> *conf.* 7.18.24

<sup>884</sup> The ethics of scarce resources

<sup>885</sup> *civ.* 14.13, *trin.* 12.3.14, cf. Hill trans. 2 p.340 note 42

<sup>886</sup> *conf.* 10.28.39

<sup>887</sup> *civ.* 4.4

<sup>888</sup> *en.Ps.* 131.5-6, 132.2

<sup>889</sup> *en.Ps.* 119.3, 131.7

Augustine in *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, the incarnate Word appears as an “anchor of hope” to fallen man, who is in danger of being swept away to destruction by immersing himself in a torrent of earthly pleasures. To those who cling to his humanity, the man Christ Jesus offers a share in his divinity, namely, eternal life<sup>890</sup>.

23 Augustine goes on in *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* to examine the three lusts of the world in turn<sup>891</sup> before explaining how Christ overcame the devil’s temptations to each by holding fast to the love of God<sup>892</sup>. The Charity or perfect love of God, which enabled Christ to interpret and obey Scripture correctly, was poured into Christ’s human heart by the Holy Spirit, whom Christ had received without measure at his baptism immediately prior to his testing in the desert<sup>893</sup>. Hence Christians too must interpret Scripture according to the Spirit, not the letter, and recognise their own obedience as a gift of the Spirit. By acknowledging any truth or virtue they have as the product of God’s grace, Christians are kept humble in their own witness to the world.

24 While cautioning against the pride which parades its good works before men for their admiration, Augustine reminds his congregation in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* that those good works undertaken for the glory of God must not be hidden: “If you fear spectators you will not have imitators: you ought therefore to be seen”<sup>894</sup>. Indeed, adds Augustine, zeal for God’s house means Christians must also be willing to intervene to stop people getting drunk, going to the theatre or indulging or any other harmful lust. “Is it a friend? Admonish him gently. Is it a wife? Let her be bridled with the utmost rigour. Is it a maid-servant? Let her be curbed even with blows. Do whatever you can... to win for Christ; because you were won for Christ”<sup>895</sup>. While Augustine’s sanctioning of physical force is highly questionable, his basic principle that Christians must strive ardently for the salvation of their neighbour as well as themselves is sound. As he himself observes towards the end of *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, Christians pray and work for enemies as well as friends because they believe God came

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<sup>890</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 2.10

<sup>891</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 2.12-13

<sup>892</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 2.14

<sup>893</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 14.10, 74.3, Mt. 3:16-4:1, Lk. 3.22, 4.1-2

<sup>894</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 8.2- In the final book of *De civitate dei*, the old Augustine tells Christians not to be reticent about proclaiming the miracles performed in Christ’s name by present saints or dead martyrs because they too stimulate and support belief (*civ.* 22.8-9).

<sup>895</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 10.9



to man in Christ while all men, including themselves, were still the enemies of God through sin<sup>896</sup>.

25 In *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, Augustine acknowledges that Christians cannot always be singing alleluia with their lips but points out that they can always be doing so with their lives through works of charity<sup>897</sup>. Whatever their vocation in life, decrees Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, all can be continually praising God “by good lives, by giving alms, by preaching [Christ’s] name and doctrine as you can... For Christ’s sake, and for the sake of life eternal, let [the father of the family] be warning, and teaching, and exhorting, and correcting all his household; let him show kindness, and exercise discipline; and so in his own house he will be fulfilling an ecclesiastical and kind of episcopal office, and serving Christ, that he may be with Him ever”<sup>898</sup>. Augustine realised that in reflecting the ideals of the Church proper, the domestic Church in particular provides an invaluable witness to the non-Christian world.

26 Unity is vital to Christian mission at any and every level. The call to be one entails the demand to be holy, as God is holy<sup>899</sup>. Christian individuals, families<sup>900</sup> or communities must therefore, as far as possible, remove any division within and between themselves. Into this unity and sanctity, the Church invites all men.

27 Augustine held man to be a good creature, corrupted by an evil will and hence prey to the three lusts of the world. These lusts and their manifestations certainly must be recognised and repented of but in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* Augustine is far less concerned with the mystery of evil than he is with the mystery of charity: for it is only in the light of God who is charity that man can understand himself. Augustine does not want his congregation to be weighed down with memories of past sins but to imitate Paul, who put all loves of the world behind him and strained on to the upward call of God in Christ Jesus<sup>901</sup>. By then receiving the love of God imparted by the Holy Spirit, Christians will be built up into

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<sup>896</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 110.6-7, Rom. 5:8

<sup>897</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 8.1, 3

<sup>898</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 51.13

<sup>899</sup> Lev. 19:2

<sup>900</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 9.2- Augustine attributes marital divorce to the devil

the Body of Christ. In becoming the mystery they receive<sup>902</sup>, Christians themselves become a sacrament of salvation to the whole world. Burning with the oil of God's grace, proclaims Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, the Church becomes a lamp of charity to the nations and a light of Truth to the world<sup>903</sup> so that in her all men may find eternal happiness- joy based on the humility, verity and charity of Jesus Christ<sup>904</sup>.

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<sup>901</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 4.6

<sup>902</sup> *serm.* 227, 229, 272

<sup>903</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 23.3

<sup>904</sup> *conf.* 7.20.26, 10.23.33

## CONCLUSIONS

1 In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus*, Augustine seeks to raise his congregation's knowledge and love of God by instructing and inspiring<sup>905</sup> them in their Christian faith. To do this, Augustine preaches the words, works and mystery of Christ and charges his listeners with the responsibility of continually going in to and out of Christ- to be going into him through prayer and contemplation in accord with faith; and to be going out of him through loving works which accord with that same faith<sup>906</sup>. By allowing his faith to work through the love of God and of neighbour in this manner, the Christian purifies himself intellectually and morally and brings others along the way of Christ as man to the Truth and Life of Christ as God<sup>907</sup>.

2 As "we can neither love Christ nor keep his commandments" without the Holy Spirit, explains Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus*, this Gift of God<sup>908</sup> was bestowed on the apostles on two separate occasions by Christ: on earth after his resurrection, so they may love neighbour; from heaven after his ascension, so they may love God<sup>909</sup>. The commandments of Christ, the gifts of the Spirit and the mission of the Church thus form one seamless robe of charity which must not be divided<sup>910</sup>. With this in mind, Augustine directs his fiercest rebukes in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* towards schismatics and heretics like the Donatists who have rendered unity<sup>911</sup>. Lest pride rise amid his own Catholic congregation, Augustine reminds his listeners that God's grace, not man's merits, are responsible for their own good practices<sup>912</sup>; a point that had to be reiterated at length as Pelagianism grew<sup>913</sup>. For Augustine, both the charity of the dove and the grace of the vine mean the same thing: cut off from either, man can bear no fruit<sup>914</sup>. When guided by the Spirit in Christ's way of humility and self-sacrifice though, Christians

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<sup>905</sup> see Introduction 40, *doctr.chr.* 4.4.6

<sup>906</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 45.14, Eph. 3:17, Gal. 5:6, Mt. 5:6

<sup>907</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 10.1-2

<sup>908</sup> *trin.* 4.5.29, 15.5.29, 33-36

<sup>909</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 74.2, *trin.* 15.6.46

<sup>910</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 13.13

<sup>911</sup> see Chapter 4.16-18

<sup>912</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 3.8-10

<sup>913</sup> see Chapter 4.27-34

<sup>914</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 6.19 (while the dove returned to the Ark with fruit, the raven drowned), *Io.ev.tr.* 81.2

enthusiastically pray and work for enemies as well as friends because God came to man in Christ while all men, including themselves, were still enemies of God through sin<sup>915</sup>.

3 Clark then is right to observe that Augustine, firstly, viewed life in the Church as a certain reproduction of the missions of the Son and the Spirit and of their union with the Father and, secondly, founded the vocation of every Christian to humility and love on the mystery of Christ's own self-emptying<sup>916</sup>. The nub of the moral theory and applied ethics presented by Augustine in *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* remains man's will, but God's revelation and gift of himself in the Son and the Spirit give new focus and strength to the will. Christians now delight in and desire to obey the precepts of Christ and are enabled to do so by the grace of the mediator and the love of God imparted by the Spirit. The acts of compassion Christians undertake, says Augustine, go to make up the sacrifice of the altar in which the Church offers herself to God. By submitting itself to God in this way, the soul loses all 'form' of worldly desire and has its memory, understanding and will of God renewed as the image of God in which man was created is 're-formed'<sup>917</sup>.

4 As this work has shown, philosophy equipped Augustine with many intellectual tools to explore and explain his Christian morality and ethics. The influence of Plato's threefold division of philosophy (natural, rational, moral) is evident in, amongst other things, Augustine's examinations of the mind (memory, understanding, will)<sup>918</sup>, the happy life (life, truth, will)<sup>919</sup>; and the legacy of concupiscence (disobedience, ignorance, infirmity)<sup>920</sup>. Augustine praised Neoplatonism in particular for realising that stability in the Truth demanded man pass beyond time and change to participate in the Creator of all things and for whom to exist is to be righteous, wise and holy<sup>921</sup>, but rejected as evil the gods and demons Porphyry and others advocated as mediators to this end because, as Plotinus recognised, man's estrangement from God was a matter of spiritual, not physical, displacement<sup>922</sup>. For Augustine, Christ Jesus emerges as the one Mediator between God and men because he alone enjoyed both a permanent

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<sup>915</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 110.6-7, Rom. 5:8

<sup>916</sup> Clark 2 p.120 in Leinhard et al eds.

<sup>917</sup> *civ.* 10.6

<sup>918</sup> see Chapter 1.41

<sup>919</sup> see Chapter 1

<sup>920</sup> see Chapter 2.26-30, 34

<sup>921</sup> see Chapter 1.5-8

blessedness as the Son of God and a transient mortality as the Son of Mary<sup>923</sup>. By conquering sin and death, Christ's cross and resurrection offer man's body and soul the *hope* of blessed immortality.

5 According to Augustine, Christ is Mediator as man and continues his work of mediation through his visible body, the Church. As a Physician, Christ administers grace to man's disordered will through the sacraments of the Church; and as a Teacher, enlightens man's confused intellect with Truth through the Church's interpretation of Scripture and Tradition. Christ applies his healing and teaching work to both the inner and the outer man because as the Mediator he acts both as an inner and outer husbandman to the vine which is his body<sup>924</sup>. In Augustine's eyes, while Christ's double commandment of love resolves philosophical debates on natural, science, logic and ethics<sup>925</sup>, Christ's fulfilment of it on Calvary exemplifies and effects<sup>926</sup> its realisation in the world. In the wise man, emotion and action are one in the pursuit of Truth and Life; in the good Christian, prayer and work become united in the way of self-sacrifice. Through such love, "he himself becomes a member... of the body of Christ, so there shall be one Christ, loving Himself"<sup>927</sup>.

6 In receiving Scripture, Christ and the Church as authentic revelations of the Word of God, the newly baptised and ordained Augustine gradually learned that from Adam all men had inherited a fallen nature, corrupt at its source and prey to temptation from the three lusts of the world. By the time Augustine was consecrated bishop, the bright promise of growth in the interdependent virtues of classical philosophy he had entertained at Cassiciacum, had given way to the grim reality of struggle with the inter-related punishments of disobedience, ignorance and infirmity. Augustine's "disillusion" and "disenchantment" with human nature and society since the Fall is described quite rightly by Markus as a "liberation from illusion... [from] previous confidence in man's intellectual and moral capabilities... The impossible quest for justice and order in this world has become a duty demanded of the just man by the very

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<sup>922</sup> see Chapter 3.35

<sup>923</sup> *civ.* 9.15, *conf.* 10.42.67

<sup>924</sup> see Chapter 4.27

<sup>925</sup> *ep.* 137, p.33-34

<sup>926</sup> see Chapter 3.29

<sup>927</sup> *ep. Io.tr.* 10.3

fragility of civilised order in the world”<sup>928</sup>. With human self-sufficiency discredited, Augustine turned to divine grace. Regarding the clearest manifestation of this, the incarnate Son of God, Augustine’s advice in *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* is simple, “Confess and embrace”<sup>929</sup>.

7 The man who confesses Christ as the Son of God but does not embrace him as such, says Augustine, becomes proud like the demons who have knowledge of Christ but no love of him<sup>930</sup>. Knowledge and love must always go in equal measure because while truth without charity seeks to dominate, charity without truth seeks to manipulate. 1Cor. 8:1 plays such a significant part in Augustine’s moral theory because it is based on the very nature of God as Truth and Charity<sup>931</sup> and, as discussion of Augustine’s ‘Love, and do what you will’ precept revealed<sup>932</sup>, it is central to the applied ethics of justice and mercy<sup>933</sup>. That he may learn how to interpret law (civil, ecclesial or otherwise) according to the Spirit rather than the Letter, man, argues Augustine, is to empty out his worldly loves through confession and so make himself fit to “drink in love Divine... from which nothing of evil can proceed”<sup>934</sup>. Such Charity, by loving self, neighbour and enemy equally in God, is able to judge all correctly<sup>935</sup>.

8 While the subject of Augustine’s moral theory is fallen man, the pivot of it is the perfect man Jesus Christ. It is because the doctrine of the mediator which is fulfilled in Christ continues to be applied through the Church that streams of Augustine’s philosophical thought flow smoothly into his ecclesial thought. Just as man’s virtue is the product of rightly ordered love, so the Christian’s good works rise from faithful prayer and the Church is One insofar as it is Holy. The lifestyle Christians are called to speculate upon is Christ’s way of humility and self-sacrificial love. In overcoming the pride and envy of Satan through the power of humility and the wisdom of loving obedience, the crucified Christ embodies the mysteries of good and evil, the battle between light and darkness and the ultimate victory of Charity over all. In *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus* and *In epistulam Iohannis ad Parthos tractatus* therefore,

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<sup>928</sup> Markus 1 p.22, 40

<sup>929</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 2.8

<sup>930</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 2.8

<sup>931</sup> Jn. 14:6, 1Jn. 4:8, 16

<sup>932</sup> see Chapter 4.12-19, 39-42

<sup>933</sup> see Chapter 3.4

<sup>934</sup> *ep.Io.tr.* 2.8

Augustine proclaims that sin is nothing and sinners become nothing<sup>936</sup> but love is everything and lovers become everything when the love of God unites the Body of Christ perfectly in eternity and Charity becomes all in all<sup>937</sup>.

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<sup>935</sup> see Chapter 5.2

<sup>936</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 1.13

<sup>937</sup> *Io.ev.tr.* 84.3

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<i>beata.v.</i>	<b><i>De beata vita</i></b> <i>The Happy Life</i> Kavanagh, D.J. trans. The Fathers of the Church 1 CIMA Publishing Co., New York 1948	32	63	29
<i>civ.</i>	<b><i>De civitate dei</i></b> <i>City of God</i> Bettenson, H. trans. Penguin Books, London 1972	41	40	47.48
<i>conf.</i>	<b><i>Confessiones</i></b> <i>Confessions</i> Chadwick, H. trans. Oxford University Press, Oxford 1992	32	33	27
<i>cat.rud.</i>	<b><i>De catechizandis rudibus</i></b> <i>On Instructing the Unlearned</i> Salmond, S.D.F. trans. Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers III W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Michigan 1980	40		46
<i>div.qu.</i>	<b><i>De diversis quaestionibus octoginta tribus</i></b> <i>Eighty-Three Different Questions</i> Mosher, D.L. trans. The Fathers of the Church 5 Catholic University of America, Washington DC 1982	40		44A
<i>doctr.chr.</i>	<b><i>De doctrina Christiana</i></b> <i>On Christian Doctrine</i> Robertson, D.W. trans. The Library of the Liberal Arts The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Indianapolis 1958	34	80	32
<i>en.Ps.</i>	<b><i>Enarrationes in Psalmos</i></b> <i>Expositions on the Book of Psalms</i> Translated by members of the English Church Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church 5, Oxford 1853	36.37		38-40
<i>ench.</i>	<b><i>Enchiridion de fide spe et caritate</i></b> <i>Faith, Hope and Charity</i> Peebles, B.M. trans. The Fathers of the Church 4 CIMA Publishing Co., New York 1947	40		46
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<i>c.Fort</i>	<b><i>Acta contra Fortunatum Manicheum</i></b> <i>Debate with Fortunatus the Manichee</i> Bibliothèque Augustinienne 17	42	25,1	



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<i>Io.ev.tr.</i>	<b><i>In Iohannis evangelium tractatus</i></b>	35	36
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<i>c.Iul.imp.</i>	<b><i>Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum</i></b>	45	85,1
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<i>lib.arb.</i>	<b><i>De libero arbitrio</i></b>	32	74 29
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